



The Journal



January - March 2009

From The Journal Jan - Feb 1998, "We Have This Ministry" by Arthur Menu

One of the hymns I came to love in my stints working for the United Church begins "We have this ministry...." It's a hymn to cheer the soul of a Christian and one of the most appropriate for the venture that The Journal is undertaking this year.

As we announced in the last issue of the Corpus Canada Journal, the Journal's ministry will be carried on by this periodical, called simply The Journal, and published by the Xristos Community Society for the next year. At the close of 1998 we will decide whether to continue this arrangement.

Several Corpus Canada members on Vancouver Island founded Xristos Community Society and had it incorporated as a society in British Columbia and approved as an official charity by Revenue Canada. We were inspired by the "New Vision" approved in 1995 at the Victoria National Conference of Corpus Canada. The charter of Xristos commits us to promote and develop small faith communities among ourselves and across Canada, as well as support other organizations that support small faith communities.

Xristos is Corpus' child and intends to serve the Corpus vision of Christianity. To insure this, the Xristos Board of Directors has appointed the members of Corpus Canada National Coordinating Team to sit on the National Advisory Council of Xristos.

But we intend The Journal to serve all small faith communities that share the Corpus vision of the Church of Christ as a community of equals, which permits all members, regardless of marital status or sex, to offer themselves for appointment to any of the Church's ministries; a Church that makes decisions through prayerful discernment and consensus of the whole membership; a Church that welcomes the marginalized to share fully in its worship and sacramental life.

We invite all small faith communities that share this vision to consider The Journal your Journal. Tell us about yourself. Send us your news. We will print as much as we can (duly edited) within the number of pages and the format we have to work with. If all the small faith communities that share the vision begin networking, we can become more effective messengers of Jesus' good news.

We don't expect always to agree about everything. There is room in the vision for diversity and disagreement. Let's not display among ourselves the intolerance we criticize in the institutional Church. The policy of The Journal is to provide a forum for small faith communities sharing the basic vision outlined above. Some of us may not agree with something another small faith community is doing. But if they want to tell the rest of us about it, The Journal will not turn down their submission just because we disagree with their approach. We will not, however, publish any submission that runs contrary to our guiding vision, except perhaps as a letter to the editor, and we will in no case publish anything that shows disrespect for others.

This policy will be interpreted and applied by The Journal's editorial board in accordance with their best judgment and subject to the guidance of Xristos National Advisory Council....

What we publish does not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, Xristos, Corpus Canada or any of the small faith communities that find a voice in The Journal.

Who has this ministry? Everyone involved in the publishing of The Journal... and you our readers share in this ministry when you make use of The Journal to grow in your understanding of the faith and reach out to others in the name of Christ.

The Journal
January - March 2009
Vol. 12, No. 1

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 Evolution Revelation
Emil Kutarna
- 4-5 The Pre-Easter Jesus
François Brassard
- 6-7 Bible Study & Spiritual Development
Chris Diamond
- 8 Sophia
Dianne Peck
- 9-10 Cheap Grace In Alberta
Phil Little
- 10 An Appeal From Vienna
Jack Shea
- 11 Theological Soapbox
Arthur Menu
- 12 Thoughts While Attending
Wayne A. Holst
- 13 An Open Letter To Bishop Luc Bouchard
Phil Little
- 14 News & Letters
- 15 Excerpts

Western Canada Corpus began April 1989. In July it became Corpus Canada and the first issue of Corpus Canada Journal began July 1989

ANNIVERSARY FOCUS TOPIC

for the April - June 2009 Issue

How have things evolved individually and as a group?

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

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

Evolution Revelation

by Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK

2009 is designated as the International Year of Astronomy, a global festival to “help citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe”. This year is the 400th anniversary of two events: the publication of *Astronomia Nova* by Johannes Kepler, a mathematician living in Prague. He discovered the laws of how the planets move. The second event is Galileo’s first use of an astronomical telescope to prove that the Earth revolved around the sun, contrary to the belief of his time that the our Earth was the centre of the universe.

These scientific discoveries had far reaching effects. Given the religious climate of the time they made the dogma that the heavens revolved around the Earth increasingly difficult to believe because they contradicted the Bible, the ‘revealed word of God’.

As we move into this third millennium it appears that we are again entering a new revolutionary view of life on this planet Earth. Again science is dragging us toward another giant leap of understanding our place in the universe. I say *dragging* because there will be much opposition from the religious institutions just as there was in the time of Kepler and Galileo.

In April this year NASA will launch a telescope named Kepler to search for Earth-like planets that may suggest there is life elsewhere in the universe. Why should we think we are alone? We know that our Earth is a small planet circling a minor sun on the edge of The Milky Way galaxy, just one of 125 billion galaxies. So out in space there are a thousand billion billion suns that may have planets supporting life. This needs a minute or two to sink in. Or if I am half serious about what we are doing on this planet, I should take an hour to do some meditating about the meaning of this.

We have been encouraged to use the bible for meditation, because it is ‘God’s revelation’ to us. Thomas Berry writes in “The Great Work”:

The religious establishments are seriously deficient in not teaching more effectively that the natural world is our primary revelatory experience. Emphasis on verbal revelation to neglect of the manifestation of the divine in the natural world is to mistake the entire revelatory process. Added to this is the excessive emphasis is Western religious traditions on redemption processes to the neglect of creation processes. This emphasis leaves us unable to benefit religiously from that primary and most profound mode of experiencing the divine in the immediacies of life”.

Another hour of meditation here, please!

Quoting Berry is not intended as Church-bashing. I am not a Church-basher, because I believe (sometimes with difficulty) that we are the Church, *not* the hierarchy. I want to emphasize my conviction that it is about time we start meditating on the wonders of the universe around us and how we came to be on this tiny planet. I thought to call this the

revelation of evolution.

The trouble is that this will be trouble as far as being a Catholic is concerned. The Catholic Church is caught in a fixation of existing cultural forms from which it will be difficult to escape. It is something like what Corpus Canada went through these past twenty years (remember we started in 1989?). At our first few conferences we had to have a celibate priest to do the closing Mass. Today we have women to concelebrate with us. At one time we thought these were huge changes. This is small potatoes compared to what is to come. Thomas Berry again:

“The transformation of human life indicated in this transition from the Cenozoic to the Ecozoic Era affects our sense of reality and values at such a profound level that it can be compared only to the great classical religious movements of the past. It affects our perception of the origin and meaning of existence itself. It might possibly be considered as a metareligious movement since it involves not simply a single segment of the human community but the entire human community, Even beyond the human order, the entire geophysical order of the planet is involved”.

Another hour of meditation.

(Cenozoic era: 65 million years ago to the present, emergence of plants animals and humans. Ecology was in control.

Ecozoic era: The present time into the future. Human life has so affected ecology that we are aware how much we need to cooperate or perish).

St. Keppler, pray for us.

St. Copernicus, pray for us.

St. Galileo, pray for us.

St. Darwin, pray for us.

St. Einstein, pray for us



The Pre-Easter Jesus

by François Brassard, Ladysmith, BC



experience of Jesus of Nazareth as best we know it from scholarly, historical research of all the Christian or secular writings.

In this article I will present a sketch of the pre-Easter (historical) Jesus, concentrating on his background and, then, on his public ministry of word and deed. I will not deal with the post-Easter Jesus or what traditional theology calls the Church: the birth, nature and development of the followers of the resurrected Jesus, called the Christ or the Chosen one of God.

What do we know about the pre-Easter Jesus of Nazareth? Most scholars would say that we know precious little about the historical Jesus. Some even deny his historical existence. Moderate scholars indicate that the best such research can reveal is varying degrees of probability or possibility and beyond that, very little with any certitude.

In the concluding chapter of Volume 2 of "A Marginal Jew," (cf. my bibliographical notes in the previous issue of *The Journal* on page 7), John P. Meier distills the following in his quest for discovering the historical Jesus.

Jesus was born in Nazareth in Lower Galilee in the final years of Herod the Great's long reign, sometime around 6 BCE. His mother was Mary. His putative (?) father, Joseph, was a woodworker who taught his son the trade. Jesus had four brothers, James, Joseph, Judah and Simon, and at least two unnamed sisters. These "patriarchal" names are an indication that Jesus came from a pious Jewish family. His mother tongue was Aramaic, but he probably knew a smattering of popular Greek for the purposes of plying his trade. Also, he probably had an oral command of sacred Hebrew through his religious training in the village. It is doubtful, yet possible, that he was literate. Meier states clearly that Jesus never married which is one of several reasons why he characterizes him as 'marginal' (unusual or on the margins of first century Jewish society), though he points out that celibacy was not unknown at the time (e.g.

John the Baptist and many Essenes).

Sometime around 28 CE, Jesus broke with the tranquil comfort of village life and, amazingly, began a new career as an itinerant lay preacher proclaiming the imminent arrival of 'the kingdom of God.' What brought about this radical change in vocation?

Most scholars agree that the historical stimulus for this action came from another marginal Jew of the time, someone more historically documented, namely, John the Baptizer. Though John restricted his end-time message of salvation from the wrath of God to the area of the lower Jordan valley around 28 CE, Jesus heard about it in far away, isolated Nazareth. Like so many others, Jesus sought out John and chose to be baptized. Whether Jesus joined the inner circle of John's disciples for a period of time is not clear, but he was definitely influenced by the underlying purpose of the message, namely, the restoration of the ten lost tribes of Israel in the end times, a popular theme at the time, one that Jesus would later integrate to his own ministry. At any rate, John was definitely Jesus' mentor.

Thus, John the Baptist was the external stimulus that transformed Jesus from village carpenter to itinerant prophet. But what was the internal stimulus? We don't know for sure. But all four Gospel writers claim that God's Spirit fell upon him with great power. They all have different opinions as to when this took place. This is not something that they ascertained conceptually. It was something that they experienced about Jesus. They *knew* that what Jesus said and did came not from others or from schooling, but from a profound, intimate relationship with God's Spirit.

When Jesus inaugurated his own public ministry is not clear. Some would claim that it was after the arrest and/or execution of John by Herod Antipas (4 BCE-39 CE). Whatever the case, Jesus struck out on his own. Yes, he maintained John's message of conversion and baptism, but he expanded his outreach geographically to cover all of Israel, and he changed the tone and scope of his message, as well as his promotional approach.

Jesus surrounded himself with a select group of disciples/apostles to assist him in the task of promoting his own message of conversion among the Jews of Palestine. There seems to be a certain amount of overlap of personnel and function between disciples and apostles, and it would appear that the group known as apostles gradually disappeared in the post Easter church.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus proclaimed the imminent coming of 'the kingdom of God,' and he told any and all who would listen to him how they needed to change the way they lived. But Jesus went further than John by telling the crowds that 'the kingdom of God' was *already* making its presence felt through his words and deeds.

Jesus promoted a different vision of God than John and the religious leadership of the time emphasized. This leadership (Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes) believed that Jews should live their

Pre-Easter Jesus Continued...

lives in a manner similar to the way God is: “Be holy (or perfect), as God is Holy (or Perfect).” This was the traditional Jewish principle for guiding behaviour, namely, the imitation of God (“imitatio Dei”). Jesus accepted this principle, but, based on his own experience of the Spirit of God's presence, he emphasized a different aspect of the way God is: “Be compassionate (loving), as God is Compassionate (Loving).”

Jesus was very critical of the way the religious leadership interpreted what a good Jew must do to be 'holy' or 'perfect.' He put in question many of the exaggerated or ridiculous requirements of “the purity (holiness) system,” for example, who you associated with or touched, what you ate and how you ate it, and when you did these things, and on and on. Jesus felt strongly that this created a caste system that punished and marginalized the vast majority of ordinary Jews. Also, he was particularly critical of the Jerusalem Temple taxation system (tithes on produce, etc.), because it impoverished the already overburdened tenant farmers.

By contrast, Jesus told stories that illustrated how God is accepting, generous and understanding of people, and that God lavished the power of compassion on all who chose to live as God does. These stories were not delivered as philosophical dissertations, nor were they pious platitudes. These stories penetrated deeply into the emotional psyche of those who had ears to hear or eyes to see.

Furthermore, Jesus backed up his message with action. He too was compassionate. He addressed his message to all who would listen, but especially to the 'outcasts' of society. In defiance of those who administered the purity laws, he ate with tax collectors, he associated with 'unattached' women or even Samaritans, he touched lepers and other disabled or, worse yet, deceased people. By his respectful and welcoming attitude he brought hope and joy to all, but especially to the destitute and downtrodden. He was seen and appreciated as a powerful “Spirit person” who spoke with authority, meaning from his own personal experience of God's presence. He was also seen as a prophet preaching justice through compassion much like Jeremiah and Ezekiel of old.

Jesus was also powerfully gifted as a healer, a fact that he himself acknowledged. However, he attributed this gift to the power of God's presence that overshadowed him. His healings drew great crowds and they were seen not just as great wonders, but more so as acts of compassion which, of course, reinforced his message. Some people saw him as the prophet Elisha returned.

By all these means Jesus engaged the people he met and, having done so, he challenged them to live God's way of radical compassion rather than the domesticated conventional ways of the day-to-day world. The stories of the prodigal son and of the good Samaritan are powerful illustrations of his core message, namely, that God loves each one of us, no matter what our background or what harm we may have caused, because God has hope in what each of us can become by being compassionate to our self and to others (all created beings). He made it clear that it was not an easy road to travel, that the journey would have no more trials and travails than God would allow us to bear. Indeed, a

life lived compassionately would not only lighten the load of suffering and eventual death, it would also make life worth living, since it connected one to the very source of Life both now and beyond death.

This last point is important, because contrary to the Sadducees, Jesus was a firm believer in resurrection. He believed that living God's way of compassion brought never-ending life, that it transfigured death, and that it opened up a whole new way of living. He proclaimed this faith with great ardour, knowing full well that, if he continued to challenge the religious leaders of his day, and particularly, the Temple priests and the Jerusalem aristocracy, he would be put to death.

In the spring of 30 CE, after two years of preaching, and despite the entreaties of his disciples not to do so, he brought his message once again to Jerusalem, where, in a Jeremiah like act of tipping over the tables of the money-changers, he confronted the religious leaders on the abusive inequities of the Temple financial system. For them it was the last straw. They had to get rid of him, especially because they thought he might cause a riot during the Passover festival. Betrayed by one of his apostles, they arrested Jesus and put him on trial before the Sanhedrin. It would appear that they trumped up charges against him, found him guilty, and then turned him over to the Roman authorities for execution by crucifixion, a truly horrible and disgraceful way to die.

Despite the horrors of dying in this way which might cause even the most courageous of humans to doubt the existence of a Compassionate God, and, especially, when his God given mission seemed to be ending in total failure, it is truly remarkable that, before dying, Jesus is claimed to have said: “Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.” Somewhere inside his Spirit filled self, Jesus *knew* that God would pluck glory from the grave.

That is the end of the pre-Easter story of Jesus of Nazareth.

When Jesus' disciples, women and men, first realized that the crucified Jesus had risen from the dead and was still present to them, the story of the post-Easter Jesus began. That is the story of the followers of Jesus down through the ages to this very day. It is the ongoing story about what followers of Jesus believe about him, about his profound connection with the Spirit of God, about his continuing presence among us, and about how we carry on in word and deed his exhortation to be compassionate as God is Compassionate. It is the story of the Church.

Bible Study & Spiritual Development

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



The Bible does not give a sure-fire blueprint for spiritual development. Discernment and judgment are needed to process its meaning and to grasp what the Scripture authors understood to be God's plan. None of them, of course, thought that they were writing Scripture. Looking through Mgr. Knox's translation of the Vulgate of the New Testament that I used as a student in the 1950s and reading the marginal notes that I made in it, I am amazed at what I find. I cannot now be sure whether the marginal notes were made in Scripture class or in theology class. Most likely in both. They are confusing enough to indicate both and to reflect the growing tension between 1950's theology and the move towards propagating the results of the newly burgeoning Roman Catholic Scripture studies. That is not a criticism of my teachers who were good men and gave the best of what they had been taught.

One flyleaf shows my notes of the summary breakdowns of the Gospels of Matthew (Mt), Mark (Mk), and Luke (Lk). Notes on Mk show

1. the Galilean ministry where Jesus preaches to the people;
2. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem when he instructs the disciples; and
3. the Jerusalem and Judean ministry that relates the last days of Jesus.

Mt shows the same Galilean ministry, Journey, and Judean preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven. The notes divide the material fivefold "to connect Mt's Jesus to Moses".

Lk shows Jesus preaching salvation in Galilee and his journey to Jerusalem where salvation is achieved. Acts of the Apostles, the sequence to Lk, shows the good news of salvation spreading from Jerusalem and reaching to Rome.

Single words and short phrases fill out the summaries as guides through the Scriptures.

So far so good, but the marginal notes reveal the direction of what I was hearing, namely, proofs for the divinity of Jesus and the authority of the Hierarchy.

Here are a few examples. Beside Mk 1:1 "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" my note says "Mark realized Christ's divinity when he wrote the Gospel. He blends his material to show that Christ is God." and at Mk 2: 23f, the story of the Pharisees censuring the disciples for plucking ears of corn on the sabbath, when Jesus says "The sabbath

was made for man not man for the sabbath." is written "Jesus does things proper only to God."

In Lk the notes state "The author is interested in individuals only in so far as they are instruments of God's saving acts." and "When Jesus calls disciples and forms the Apostles, he constitutes the Hierarchy."

The note for Mt 18 shows that the Hierarchy has "full authority in conscience, doctrine, and legislation - full judicial power of binding and loosing for the good of the Church, and this is to be handed on".

Another flyleaf is obviously notes from theology class: "Christ is God because of his authority, dignity, and power." and this note is replete with references to the Gospels and the letters of Paul. Also well documented from the New Testament is "Christ is man with a body and a soul in one person with two natures. His knowledge is beatific, infused, and acquired."

Growth in spiritual life is always a work in progress. I don't remember how much theology helped me in that progress but I realize now how much the study of the Scriptures has contributed to my spiritual development. Like most Catholics, I started out with basic catechism - 'religious knowledge' - and a literalist understanding of the Bible stories. My spiritual life focused on prayers, sacraments, devotions, and as an altar boy, knowing the Latin responses and the correct movements in the sanctuary.

My Scripture study has built on these. I know that God didn't flood the earth, nor do those awful things to the Egyptians, and that it was the Hebrews who slaughtered the Canaanites and took over the "holy land" in God's name believing they had God's consent. Prophets, such as Isaiah, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel, right down to and including John the Baptist who did baptize Jesus, did not see the future nor see Jesus messiah. These holy ones spoke to their own congregations and read the times they lived in. Each one of us has the same grace of God to do the same. If that's all I ever get from Scripture study, it is reward enough.

Pius XII opened the way for scripture study when he recognized that the Bible could not be understood unless the different types of writing were recognized and taken into account. Reading the Bible literally is the surest way of getting it wrong since history, culture, formulas, folktales, and metaphors, and so on are all used and blended together by people who loved stories and, therefore, talked about God in the only way they knew how. For example, when they had no idea of going to heaven, salvation meant a long good life here on earth. When the after-life idea became a hope, salvation meant being called to God's kingdom on "the day of the Lord".

Bible authors used formulas, such as "The word of the Lord came to (name)"; these were indicators that the words had been discerned as true to God's covenant and were to be taken seriously. Authors, redactors, translators have done their best to be true to the truth of "the word of the Lord". It has been an enormous human accomplishment. "The Bible is a witness to the struggle for truth....But as soon as we take note of the human dimension of Scripture, and especially how it came into being, a new perspective opens. We recognize the long road traveled by Israel toward true faith and acknowledgment of God, and we find an example that inspires us on our journey." (Preface of Volume 20 of *Concilium*,

Bible Study Continued...

Paulist Press quoted by Kathryn Sullivan in *The Bible Today*, April 1967 p. 2127)

The language, the words that authors and translators use are their own and subject to the pulls of time, place, and spiritual outlook. It is difficult to reach the meaning of the texts. There are words and phrases that require research to unearth their meaning, words such as God's "anger", "revenge", "wrath", "vengeance", or that speak of "sacrifice", "atonement", "repentance", "salvation", "redemption", "obedience", "authority", "eternity", "hell", "mercy", "pity", "justification", "faith". There is a whole biblical vocabulary that suffers from interpretation or some sort of bias or that shores up a particular spiritual attitude for whatever reason. Studying the Bible in context, not reading meaning into the text but reading meaning out of the text, opens up the ways that believers strove to express their faith experiences. They expressed their faith, and I strive to know what they meant. That helps me to place and express my own faith experience.

The writers of the Bible stress the fidelity of God. That has been a help to me in my spiritual development. All through the Bible particularly when people did not understand what was happening to them or when they were not faithful to their promises of worship and behaviour, God is seen as their rescuer from bad situations. God's part in the covenants is never negated no matter what people have done. When the priesthood of the Temple ended, it did not end the Ancient Covenant. When the Temple leaders fell into apostasy, John the Baptist first and then Jesus read their time, saw the situation, and took God's message of rescue to the people - John to the valley of the River Jordan and Jesus to the towns and hamlets where people lived. They announced the imminent "day of the Lord" and they urged the Jews to live right and to be part of God's reign. "God does not regret the gifts he makes nor the calls he issues." (Rom 11:28 quoted in *Nostra Aetate* # 4 by Vatican II) Jesus' cup of the new covenant is eating and drinking together in common meal fellowship. (Lk 22) "The Lucan formula identifies the cup with the new

covenant....Jesus' words over the cup imply, as did those over the bread, that his life is involved." (*The Gospel According to Luke* by Joseph A. Fitzmyer p.1402)

Bible writers express their relationship with God in terms of what has happened to them. When believers in Yahweh are nomads and shepherds, God is said to walk and talk with them "in the cool of the evening", "to pitch his tent" among them, and even "to regret that he had made them" in the first place. God's covenants are described after the fashion of tribal covenants with neighbouring tribes. When Israel society becomes settled with a temple and a priesthood, the God-talk becomes more liturgical and priestly. One has only to read the opening chapter of the Bible or the book of Leviticus to see the priestly language.

The God of the Bible is not an idea that can be analyzed and taken apart. God is known by the things that God faithfully does. God is the nameless One; God is the Unknown; God is different from anything that we know; God is Yahweh, that is, God is present as God is present and not as anyone else determines.

God in the Old Testament and in the New as well is talked about in story and metaphor. Abraham did not say that he "believed in God"; he told a story: "My father was a wandering Aramaean..." In the Bible, God is the Breath of life, the Visitor in the garden, the Wrestler by the stream, the Finger who writes on stone, the Pillar of fire, the Water of life, the Rock cleft for me, the Prodigal Father, the One who makes things right; Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Door, the Paschal Victim, the High Priest, the King, the Rescuer, the Story Teller. The list is long.

I reflect on each of these images and stories and search to discern the image that lies behind each one so that my life will be on a sound foundation. It is a work in progress and I won't live long enough to exhaust it. Fortunately, "In my Father's house there are many abodes." (Jn 14:2) And each one of our names is on the door. Metaphors are not always hard to grasp - sometimes.

You are invited to join us..

***"Intentional Eucharistic Communities:
Embracing and Shaping Our Future"***

A Gathering of Intentional Eucharistic Communities

May 15-17, 2009

National 4-H Conference Center

7100 Connecticut Avenue

Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815





I am reading “Music of the Soul”, by Sufi Shaykh Sa’id al Jamal. It is a book of teachings about how impassioned our encounter with the Divine can be. The author writes from a lover’s heart. Theresa of Avila or John of the Cross would be completely at home with this book. The heart and soul of the writer are poured out before his God in such love language as, “Give me Your heart to be my heart”.

“I want to live in the world of Your soul”.

“I want to sit in Your soul, near the door of love, all the time.

And the Divine Beloved answers,

“I give you more than My heart. I give you My soul”.

“I put you in My eye”.

“I have wanted you from the beginning”.

I am struck by the parallel between the language of the heart for longing for intimacy with God, and that of a lover for his/her beloved.

Yes, I have love on my mind, which is fitting in this month of February. I don’t know how long it may be since the readers of the Sophia column have written a passionate letter to their beloved, but I recommend it. Age is of no consequence, neither that of the lovers nor of the relationship. For example, an 80 year old friend named Peggy was married for 55 years, widowed for five, and never dreamt she would find love again. But then she met John, 83, also widowed after many years of marriage. They are inseparable, and the love language in Music of the Soul would barely give adequate expression to their emotion.

This is Thomas Moore’s definition of a soul mate:

“A soul mate is someone to whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communication and communing that take place between us were not the product of intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace.

This kind of relationship is so important to the soul that many have said there is nothing more precious in life”.

I am in the process of manifesting a soul mate. What that means is, I am in preparation. I am preparing the way and preparing a place. First, a heart place. And that means doing some inner housecleaning and re-arranging. It means a letting go of any thing that keeps me from thinking and feeling like the kind of beloved I want to draw into my life. Ghandi told us to be the peace we want to see in the world. And there it is, the bottom line that makes any love relationship a success or not. We first need to be the love we want to find in the other.

Whether you are in a long established love relationship, or desiring to begin one, spiritual writer Marianne Williamson says, “Romance is a state in which your primary relationship is not with your beloved, but with your Self”.

That means falling madly in love with your self first.

Here is a meditation by Debbie Ford, world renowned author and

relationship coach, to help us practice the art of loving our self. “Get quiet, and comfortable, lying down or sitting. You may want to have pen and paper at hand.

Breathe in deeply and slowly, and slowly release your breath.

See an image of your most magnificent, worthy, loving, holy self, your radiant self, radiating love. What does this aspect of yourself look like? What age are you?

Connect to this aspect of yourself by your breath.

Now have a heart to heart.

Ask this this aspect of yourself to tell you what’s great about you.

What makes you wonderful.

Then allow yourself to hear from your most loveable self all the reasons why you are worthy and deserving of creating and having the love of your life.

Ask yourself to show you all the good you have done; the people you’ve supported; whose lives are enriched because you are there.

Breathe in and open up.

Hear the acknowledgement, the truth about you.

Ask to be told all the qualities you possess that make you unique, important to the world, and loveable.

Ask what you need to give up to fall madly in love with yourself again and again.

What thoughts, what beliefs. What behaviours and patterns do you need to leave behind in order to feel how desirable and awesome you are.

Breathe in; exhale.

If you are willing to give those up, in the name of love, acknowledge that to this part of you.

Ask to be told the words you need to say to yourself, words you need to hear in order to be in the presence of love everyday.

Is it that you are kind, good enough, a genius, beautiful, competent, creative, needed...

Breathe in those words. See then written across your consciousness. Pick three or four and repeat them several times.

Breathe them in because you are so worthy of love. Notice how your heart is softening; how they make you feel appreciative of yourself.

These are your words; you heard them from a part of you.

Acknowledge

Take a slow deep breath, allow the exhale to melt away anything between you and being one with love.

See how you loving you would bring benefit to the people you love...partner, children/grandchildren, friends, community.

To love your self completely is to give love to each and every person that you meet.

Now imagine all the people you love, and who love you, whether they are the people who are still here or the people who are gone, cheering you on.

Allow their love to penetrate every cell of your body.

On the next exhale, repeat, “ I am loved. I am loveable. I am love”.

Repeat this several times. Allow the vibrations of the words to melt away anything keeping you from that reality.

“ I am loved. I am loveable. I am love.”

The magnificence of your humanity, the goodness of your heart.

Cheap Grace In Alberta

by Phil Little, Cedar, BC



While we are all made from the same cosmic dust of the universe, we are creatures of specific organic compounds and molecules that pull us to specific regions of our planet. For me that is southern Alberta where I was born and

raised in the Catholicism of the mid-20th century. My grandparents were homesteaders east of Calgary and south of what is known as the Bible belt.

It is not uncommon that I get inquiries from relatives and friends on church related matters, and so was the call in late December regarding an event being promoted in a parish in Calgary. Somewhat related to the "Year of St. Paul" the parish was organizing a "pilgrimage" one Sunday in late January for the purpose of collecting "plenary indulgences". This was not a cowboy version of the "Camino Real" where pilgrims actually walk for days. The parish was organizing "car pooling" so that these modern pilgrims could be transported from their parish to another designated church on the other side of the city, say a few prayers and come back with a plenary indulgence which they could keep for themselves or designate for a dearly departed soul. The participants would not be inconvenienced greatly and would be there and back within hours.

At first I thought this was a misunderstanding but a quick surf on the web had me reading from the parish bulletin that indeed "a Plenary Indulgence is offered for those who make the Pilgrimage". Now sometimes members of the clergy are known to do some strange things so I sent off an email to the bishop asking if he knew what was going on in his diocese. The reply came with great courtesy and forthright acknowledgment that the parish was following the guidance of the bishop himself as instructed in the "Diocesan Carillon Newspaper dealing with the year of St. Paul and Indulgences". The Bishop relied on the instructions of Pope Benedict XVI who decreed the granting of plenary indulgences "to provide for the faithful with spiritual treasures for their own sanctification". It was left to the local bishops to designate which churches could be used to collect these indulgences.

So one decade into the 21st Century and fifty years after John XXIII called for the church to open itself to the modern world, how does the church interpret the message of the preacher from Galilee? When the second Vatican Council finished in 1965 the world was experiencing a time of prosperity and peace was seemingly within grasp. Pope Paul VI traveled to the United Nations and called to all peoples (and all religions) to seek peace. In 2009 we are facing a meltdown of the world's economical systems, neo-colonial and civil wars with evidence of genocide, forced deportations, slavery, and the rise of totalitarian theocracies. As a human species we are on the verge perhaps of causing the destruction of the planet on which we live, at least for present day life forms. In the province of Alberta, the divinity of the petro-dollar has been proclaimed by a government subservient to companies such as EnCana and the Tar Sands developers. The destruction of major

watersheds including the Athabasca River which flows north eventually to the Arctic Ocean, and the poisoning of the people of the north - mostly First Nation Cree and Dene - is dismissed as collateral damage and the price of progress.

The Roman Catholic Church is suffering a major "credibility gap" from the Pope down to the local clergy. When an effort is made to speak prophetically, as attempted recently by Bishop Luc Bouchard, the message is drowned out by the noise of what mainly comes from the church - the preoccupation with issues of the groin or the "relativity" of inter-faith dialogue. In the city where the petroleum barons make their decisions on how best to exploit the reserves of "dirty oil", the local church is promoting "plenary indulgences".

The official Catechism defines indulgences (beginning section 1471) as being something that the church has the "power" to grant to mitigate the "temporal punishment due to sin". At one time indulgences were written as receipts and provided by or through the Papacy for actions performed or for donations scaled to the severity of the sin. The invention of the printing press enabled the church to use the indulgence system as a major fundraiser. The issue of indulgences became one of the institutional abuses that led to the Reformation.

In 1939 "The Cost of Discipleship" was published. This was a reflection on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 9:35-10:42) by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in which he expresses his concern about the "cheap grace" pedaled by the church in Germany. This was a grace that did not challenge and did not define - it provided a cover for the rise of the Nazi movement. Cheap grace was a justification of sin, a grace without discipleship, and a grace without the cross.

"Real Grace" for Bonhoeffer came with suffering, being willing to carry the cross and to provide witness as a disciple of the one who was crucified. Real grace came with strict obedience in the spirit of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. As Bonhoeffer puts it "...Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: "my yoke is easy and my burden light." Cheap grace comes from a desire to be saved in the next world but not this one. The business of church is to convince us of our need to be saved, and then of course the church is the purveyor of the means of salvation by hook or crook and just like Walmart there are regular discount specials - called "indulgences" which take the pain out of discipleship.

Indulgences are perhaps just a symptom of a much larger ailment that is fatal to the soul. The church has condensed the "come follow me" of scriptures to a simplistic and limited "do these things" and eternity it promised: a trip once a week to church for at best 45 minutes of poor sermons and insipid music, confession and forgiveness without repentance, baptism without discipline, first Fridays and adoration of the sacrament. It is almost as if these were designed purposely to distract the pilgrim from walking the path of discipleship - cheap grace comes without the risks and dangers of seeking the kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven".

George Monbiot in 2006 wrote about "carbon offset programs"

Cheap Grace In Alberta Continued...

showing how the indulgence scheme has been being borrowed by the secular world to market “clean consciences” by those who continue to crap on mother earth. (Guardian Oct 18, 2006). The purchase of carbon offsets are being used to justify increased production of carbon fuels beyond the ability of the planet to absorb these pollutants. Monbiot concludes “you can buy complacency, political apathy and self-satisfaction but you cannot buy the survival of the planet”.

Complacency, political apathy, and self-satisfaction are the fruits of cheap grace. When the grandchildren of Alberta awaken in 2050 they may curse those who sold their birthright for a pittance and left them with environmental waste on the scale of Chernobyl. In seeking an analysis of what went wrong, it will be found that the “church” (all the churches) offered no vision and no inspiration for people of faith

to engage the real world and seek transformation and real reconciliation.

Chico Mendez and Dorothy Stang are two Brazilian martyrs of our time who refused cheap grace and embraced discipleship - calling us to love this planet and to protect all life forms. Have we forgotten - “remember that thou art cosmic dust and to cosmic dust shall you return”. What we leave behind is history - rather the “story” of our failure to grasp the sacredness of all creation. In the complexity of our evolution as spiritual creatures, would it be simple laziness that caused us to settle for religious trinkets and numbing salves that stunted the growth of our consciousness with complacency, political apathy and self-satisfaction?

An Appeal From Vienna

by Jack Shea, Nepean, ON



The Final Statement from the International Federation for a Renewed Catholic Ministry. The International Federation for a Renewed Catholic Ministry, gathered in Vienna 6-9 November 2008, calls for a renewal of ministry as the first step towards "A Future for God's People".

The crisis in ministry, a severe shortage of ordained ministers and suitable candidates has accelerated the Church crisis where large numbers abandon their Catholic heritage and where

the character of credible Church authority has been undermined. Indeed the very misuse of authority in rejecting a fully inclusive ministry has created the ministerial crisis. There is no lack of callings and gifts in the Catholic community at large; a lack of vision and courage keeps us from following where the Spirit is leading us.

Efforts to address the ministerial crisis by merging or closing parishes have deprived the Catholic community of the Eucharist and pastoral care which are at the very heart of what it means to be Catholic.

The Catholic Church in the past adapted to the 'signs of the times' as it created a ministry of Jerusalem elders and Corinthians charismatics, of Roman imperial scholars and feudal monastic communities, of missionaries to the world and prophets of social justice, of university-trained pastors and ministers of daily life.

It is time now to create anew a ministry that is inclusive in gender and marital status most especially but also a ministry that is truly collegial. Without inclusivity and collegiality as taught by Vatican II, the ministry of the Church cannot become a sacrament or sign of human rights and gospel norms. Without those rights and norms,

the authority of the Church cannot be viable.

It is indeed time to welcome ministerial candidates whose callings and gifts have enriched our Church. They must be welcomed, however, not only by Church leaders but, beforehand, by the communities they serve, communities which select them and receive them.

The long delay in the reform and renewal of ministry has undermined the life of the Church and its witness to Christ. The current crisis calls for an interim and alternative approach. Until the ministry is officially made inclusive and collegial, we offer as our charter the *Church and Ministry* statement of the Dominicans of the Netherlands:

On the basis of the priority of the People of God over the hierarchy

– stated explicitly during the Second Vatican Council – a diocesan bishop may be expected to confirm such a choice after due consultation by the laying on of hands. If a bishop should refuse such a confirmation or 'ordination' on the basis of arguments not involving the essence of the Eucharist, such as obligatory celibacy, parishes may be confident that they are able to celebrate a real and genuine Eucharist when they are together in prayer and share bread and wine.

We urge parishes to act in this way with a great amount of self-confidence and courage. It is to be hoped that, stimulated also by such a relatively new practice, bishops may in the future live up to their commitment to serve and eventually confirm the leaders of local communities in their office.

This appeal of our Congress emerges from our love of Christ and Church, from the New Testament and Vatican II, from our sense of Tradition and the signs of the times, from the hope we continue to have for the Catholic community we have served all our lives.

Vienna, 8 November 2008

Theological Soapbox: The God Of Whom You Are Afraid Does Not Exist

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC



In many organizations there are rules against a person in authority initiating a sexual relationship with a subordinate. The reason for this is that, because the boss has power over the subordinate, and can use that power to punish the subordinate if the subordinate rejects the boss's overture, the overture is coercive. Even if the boss does not intend to

punish the subordinate for rejecting the overture, the possibility that the boss might do causes the subordinate to be fearful.

What if we apply this logic to God and God's human creatures? That God seeks a relationship with us is clear from revelation. That this relationship is infinitely more intimate than a sexual relationship is also clear. God seeks a spiritual union, in which our souls are united to God so completely that God's heart and mind and will become our heart and mind and will. Sex doesn't even come close to this degree of intimacy.

Given that God is almighty and God's power over us is absolute and unlimited, and applying the same standard we use for relationships between two human beings, it would be wrong for God to make overtures to us. The most a human being can do to punish us is make us suffer for a while or kill us. But God can kill us and make us suffer for eternity. Even if God does not intend to punish us if we reject God's overture, the mere possibility would be enough to terrify us.

This is evident from the hellfire and brimstone preaching that can be heard in many churches. If the preacher speaks with conviction, it is because the preacher is truly afraid of what God will do if the preacher rejects God's invitation. And if the congregation feels this kind of preaching to be true, it is because they also have this fear in them.

God does not want us to accept God's overtures because we are afraid. Not only would this violate the freedom God created us to have and exercise, it would make it impossible for us to accept God's invitation. There is always a part of us that stands apart from someone we fear. Fear creates a distance that blocks the total intimacy that God wants to have with us.

So what is God to do? The only thing God can do is leave it up to us whether God will exist for us. If we choose not to believe in the existence of God, then God will allow us to live as if God truly did not exist. God will be absent from the universe in which we live, not only in this life but for all eternity.

The God I am speaking of is not merely a "First Cause", an uncaused "something" that causes the universe to come into and remain in existence. A First Cause does not necessarily want to have a personal relationship with human beings. Human freedom is not impaired by believing that some First Cause created the universe, set in place laws of nature, and then stood aside to let people do what they like, neither rewarding nor punishing them for what they did.

The God of whom I speak is the God of Jesus, whom he called Father, who loves and wants to be loved by his human creatures. The

love of which I speak is the answer to Jesus' prayer, "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:22).

Those brought up in a religion that made them afraid of God cannot respond to God's invitation to total intimacy. To be able to respond fully to this invitation, they must first become atheists. Those who do not believe God exists, do not fear being punished by God. As atheists, they have the freedom to give up their atheism, to choose to believe in God, and accept God's invitation. In becoming atheists, those who are in terror of God, and thus unable to give themselves entirely to God, gain the freedom to choose to believe in God without in any way being motivated by fear.

This is the stage that many a mystic has gone through, though they dare not say they have become atheists. They use metaphors such as "dark night of the soul" and "desolation of spirit". The reality is that they have stopped believing in the existence of God. But they no longer are afraid of God. They have been liberated from all fear of punishment.

Even though they have lost their belief in God, they may choose to continue to participate actively in the Christian community. People in Christian communities are bound together by much more than a belief in the existence of God. They are bound together by culture and friendships and a multitude of social relationships. A member of the community who has become an atheist may still have needs that can only be met by remaining within the community. Such a one may even participate in the worship life of the community because they find the rituals aesthetically pleasing or comforting, or because of other reasons. People like this may continue the outward practice of religion for a wide range of reasons, but if they are honest, they do not boast of a faith they no longer possess.

All the while, as they go through this time of unbelief, they are deciding whether they want the total intimacy with God that God, were God to exist, invites them to. They ponder the price to be paid for such intimacy—nothing less than the extinction of the self that stands apart from God, a complete giving up of the capacity to think and will in opposition to what God thinks and wills. For until we let go of ourselves in this way, each of us is a god unto ourselves. And there are those would rather have the satisfaction of being their own god, than have the joy of those who accept God's invitation to intimacy.

If they do decide they want the intimacy that God offers them, God will grant them the gift of faith. But it will be a better and purer faith than the faith they had earlier abandoned, for it will not in any way be motivated by fear of punishment.

There is much talk these days of the advertisements that atheistic organizations are putting on buses or in public places saying, "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." Some Christians are objecting and want the ads banned. I disagree. From an objective point of view, the existence of God, as Christians understand God, is quite improbable. People can give up belief in God without fearing that to do so would be irrational. If they become atheists, and as a result stop worrying and enjoy life, that may be a step on the road to genuine faith.

The God of whom you are afraid does not exist.

Thoughts While Attending Mass Led By Priest Monica Kilburn Smith

by Wayne A. Holst, Calgary, AB



During the past months I have reflected on two events in very different contexts that affected me deeply. The first occurred during a visit by my wife Marlene and I to Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany. The second took place at a mass that we attended at St. Andrew's United Church, Calgary.

From the time I was very young, Martin Luther was a hero of mine. Luther - in exile and under the interdict of the Holy Roman Emperor - spent the better part of 1521 translating the New Testament from Greek into German. He did this so that his compatriots would have

access to the Bible in their own language. What transpired in that ancient Thuringian castle almost five hundred years ago marked a paradigm shift of major proportions. What had been previously unthinkable was now possible. The Holy Scriptures were taken from the religious elite and offered to the common people.

When I stood in that sparse, cold room - the very quarters, where Luther did his translation work - I was overcome. I reflected on the great spiritual struggles that must have transpired in this place and the magnificent collaboration of the human and divine that occurred here.

Several weekends ago we attended the first mass led by our friend Monica Kilburn Smith. On May 29th of this year, in St. Aidan's United Church, Victoria, BC Monica was ordained a priest. Now, surrounded by a community of faithful friends supporters, she was conducting her first public mass at St. Andrews United Church, Calgary.

The pathos and pride experienced at both events was hauntingly similar.

Of course, this ordination service was not canonically approved by the Roman Catholic Church. Women cannot currently be priests in that church. Monica's submission to the rite of ordination could be compared to the defiance of Luther defending his teachings before a theological court in the German city of Worms. Both acts were heretical to the hierarchy. To my knowledge, Monica has not received a letter of excommunication from Rome and there is no apparent bounty on her head. Yet, she shares with Luther an automatic declaration that she is no longer in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. I cannot possibly know how either heretic must have felt when the full weight of their decision struck home. Yet, I do know from my own experience with the church that rejection can be devastating.

My respect for Martin and for Monica continues to grow with time and perspective as both faced the realities of their decisions with eyes wide open. What gives people strength to persevere in these circumstances? First, I would suggest that living with integrity provides sustenance. When our faith and actions are congruent, it is possible to withstand many challenges. Second, the support of a community, and the awareness of their prayers can mean much.

Luther depended on Duke Frederick of Saxony and many of his colleagues in Wittenberg. Monica has good friends and strong supporters in Calgary and beyond. Finally, while we can never know for certain the outcome of profound decisions, a great hope ennobles the hearts and enlarges the lives of those who put their faith on the line.

On leaving mass, we expressed our love and gratitude to Monica for the opportunity to participate in this historic event and an appropriate passage of scripture came to mind. Members of the early Christian community faced reaction and rejection from those in the religious establishment of their time. A court case involved them with the leaders in Jerusalem. After much debate over the fate of the 'heretics' a wise man named Gamaliel spoke up. His spiritual insight carried the day then as they could now. "If this enterprise is of human origin," said Gamaliel, "it will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God, you will be unable to destroy them... Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5:38-39)

Wayne A. Holst teaches religion and culture at the University of Calgary and co-ordinates adult spiritual development at St. David's United Church in that city.

New Catholic Times: Sensus Fidelium Publishing and postal costs put the squeeze on the Catholic paper "Catholic New Times", but this only caused Catholic writers to reconsider the medium to convey the message. Sensus Fidelium is the on-line response.

"The People of God as a whole is the bearer of the living Tradition, because the Holy Spirit works through all members of the community, including in particular its theologians. The process of communicating and of receiving and re-receiving the Tradition involves all of the baptized--bishops, clergy, and lay people alike. Their common grasp of the faith is known as the sensus fidelium."

new catholic times sensus fidelium hopes to be a distinctly Canadian forum for conversation appearing bi-monthly on the Internet beginning January 2008. To check out this website and to subscribe go to <http://www.newcatholictimes.com/>

An Open Letter To Bishop Luc Bouchard

by Phil Little, Cedar, BC

A few weeks ago I read about your comments in the national media regarding the oil sands development and also received a number of emails from across the country highlighting your open statements. Your pastoral letter on "The Integrity of Creation and the Athabasca Oil Sands" is a prophetic document. (1)

I am an ordained RC priest, having worked in Peru as a missionary with the Oblate congregation, and I am married with three grown children. I live on Vancouver Island in retirement.

The Alberta bishops in 1998 issued a statement "Alberta Bishops' Statement on the Care of God's Creation" (2) which was in itself pointing in the right direction but spoke in generalities so as not to offend. Doubtless this document was probably not even read by the clergy and had little influence in the spirituality of the "ordinary" Catholic of the province.

Back in 1983 the CCCB supported a very prophetic call for justice in the statement known as "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis" written by a trio of bishops - Bernard Pappin, Adolphe Proulx, and Remi DeRoo. Bishop DeRoo wrote about the experience of this prophetic cry 20 years later (3) and said: "It was an effort to apply our social teachings, especially the Vatican II Constitution on "The Church in the World of Today," to a specific issue affecting our country."

This was a different time when the hope of Vatican II was still alive. Of course there was a negative response from the economic warlords who criticized the bishops for wandering into temporal affairs and told them to return to their sacristies to concern themselves with more spiritual affairs.

Unfortunately that is what most bishops of the CCCB did and since that time it seems that the only major economic concern of the church was how to pay off the 2002 World Youth Day debt (\$38 million).

With the current meltdown of the world's economy it would be appropriate simply to reissue "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis" but I think we can agree that such is not going to happen. When the Catholic community could rightly be celebrating the historic 50th anniversary of the call for Vatican II by Pope John XXIII, we face a deafening silence and timidity by church leaders. It is much easier to promote indulgences for the year of St. Paul than to be part of the real world.

I would like to hope that your statement about the oil sands is (perhaps) a beginning of a real prophetic position where you, as a church leader, calls for a re-examination and a change in the way things are being done in the name of economic development. I do think you need support and encouragement, and that is not going to come from your peers in the CCCB. That would make it too easy to be prophetic. Perhaps you could seek the advice of Bishop DeRoo, the only surviving member of the trio that wrote "the ethical reflections". He is in retirement now and anxious to talk to anyone interested in the history of Vatican II. Perhaps there are a few bishops across the country who may be willing to sit with you to discern what is needed in terms of reflection, analysis and pronouncements. I can think that perhaps Sylvain Lavoi of Keewatin-The Pas, and Martin Currie of St. John's Nfld. might share both similar concerns because of their missionary perspective. Hopefully you can think of a few others who might be willing to sit in a prophetic circle - maybe even bring in Rene Fumoleau and a few lay persons.

I have not written before because I was disturbed that your position

seems to come so late. Where have you been? Where have the bishops of Alberta been hiding over the past decades as the oilsands project took over the economy and the heart of Alberta. Companies such as EnCana have viciously sucked out energy resources with little concern for ground water or local community welfare. The devastation and health impact on native communities north of the oilsands projects have been highlighted by medical authorities, even at risk of their careers. It is not just the environmental impact - which is considerable and all encompassing but a level of human suffering that is not fully acknowledged by industry or government. (attached articles)

As far as bishops go you are relatively young but your recent statements have received national attention and have probably ruined any chance of promotion to a warmer diocese. That would give you a freedom to more deeply concern yourself with the reality of your diocese and its people - first nations communities, the multi-cultural diversity of immigrant villages and towns, and the migrant worker population attracted by the boom of the oil industry. Vatican II was a call to read the signs of the times and to proclaim the gospel message in a relevant manner in relation to the modern world. The modern world is in crisis - a manufactured crisis - and in need of a prophetic voice.

So there is hope. You cannot speak alone - even as bishop. Your clergy who are about as much as a United Nations as you would find anywhere in the world need support to understand the reality of the north so that they can faithfully proclaim the gospel as is their ministry. No doubt there will be opposition and ridicule, even from people of the church. I would like to think (believe) that your statement is a new beginning coming out of an honest desire to confront a soulless economic pursuit of wealth and power. That is what is needed NOW.

After Medellin the church of Latin America began to understand the need to proclaim the gospel from the perspective of a "preferential option for the poor". This led to prophetic cries and the witness of bishops like Romero in El Salvador, Samuel Ruiz in Chiapas, Leonidas Proaño of Ecuador, Helder Câmara of Recife, and many clergy and many more lay persons.

Like Jeremiah their call to be prophetic was reluctant - and painful. At times they were eliminated by a system that could not tolerate their voice, just as the imperial system of Rome could not tolerate a humble preacher from Galilee. It is a haunting blessing that in part encourages me to write to you, in that in my years in Latin America I came to know three persons who gave their lives to proclaim the gospel - Fr. Iván Betancourt in Honduras, Fr. Vicente Hondarza in Peru, and Fanny Abanto Calle, a teacher in Chiclayo Peru.

May these saints guide you.

Best wishes,

Phil Little

News & Letters

February 4, 2009

Dear Holy Father,

The Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE) calls on you to lift, in a gesture of reconciliation toward women in the Church, the May 29, 2008 decree of automatic excommunication issued against all Roman Catholic Women priests or bishops. We are aware that the Congregation for Bishops, instructed by the Pope, removed the excommunication of four dissenting bishops on January 21, 2009 for the same reason of promoting Church unity. Rescinding the decree of automatic excommunication would be an act not of charity but of justice. By showing this leadership, the Pope would be taking a great step forward in promoting the full dignity of women. The current practice of saying there is no discrimination against women, and that women cannot be ordained because this is Christ's will tragically shifts blame for injustice onto Christ. It presents him as one of the worst discriminators against women in history. It is not Christ who bars women from sacred ministry, it is Canon Law. Grave injustice is done not only to women but to the entire Body of Christ every single time an authentic vocation is discriminated against on the basis of one's sex. This is contrary to St. Paul's teaching that "In Christ there is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." It is also a gross violation of women's human rights as Vatican II declares: Any kind of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 29, 2

Respectfully,

The National Work Group of Catholic Network for Women's Equality

Michele Birch Conery, Marie Bouclin, Therese Koturbash, Paula MacQuarrie, Jocelyn Rait.

The annual Christmas Party for Corpus-National Capital Region, Catholic Network for Women's Equality, Concerned Catholics of Ottawa, and the Cosmology Group was held this year, as it has been for many years, in the lounge of the condominium, The Halcyon, of Maurice and Claudia Sullivan in Ottawa. Fifty-two people attended - members of these groups and some of their friends. It was an evening of socializing, reminiscing, and sharing a delicious pot-luck meal. As on many of these occasions in the past, the meal was introduced by a Reflection from our gracious co-host Maurice. (The text of Reflection will be in a future issue of *The Journal*. Ed)

Jim Noonan

CORPUS-NCR, ON THE ONE HAND, ADVOCATES A GREATER ROLE FOR LAYPEOPLE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH. ON THE OTHER HAND, CORPUS CANADA ADVOCATES GOVERNANCE IN THE CHURCH IMPLEMENTING CONSENSUS-TAKING IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. IN OTHER WORDS, ADDED IMPORTANCE TO THE CONSULTATION BY THE HIERARCHY OF THE VIEWS AND DESIRES OF LAYPEOPLE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH SHOULD BECOME COMMON PRACTICE. HOWEVER, THE TWO VIEWS REGARDING GOVERNANCE FALL UPON DEAF EARS BECAUSE THE CCCB (CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF CANADIAN BISHOPS) HAS REFUSED TO MEET OFFICIALLY WITH CORPUS OF CANADA CANADA. FURTHERMORE, JUST AS PRIESTS IN GERMANY ARE REQUIRED TO LOOK AFTER MORE THAN ONE PARISH, A SIMILAR SHORTAGE OF PRIEST OBTAINS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF WINNIPEG. ADDITIONALLY, OFFSHORE PRIESTS HERE OUTNUMBER CANADIAN PRIESTS. YET, IN MY OPINION, THERE IS A GREATER NEED THAN GOVERNANCE AND SHORTAGE OF PRIESTS, NAMELY, THE NEED FOR EVANGELIZATION, AN APOSTOLATE DESIGNED FOR HUSBAND-AND- WIFE TEAMS HOLDING MEETINGS IN THEIR HOMES AND EVENTUALLY, IN PARISH HALLS DESIGNED TO MOTIVATE WAYWARD CATHOLICS TO RETURN TO THE FOLD. THESE TEAMS WOULD SHARE THEIR POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF REGULAR CHURCH FAMILY ATTENDANCE, SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH EXCHANGES OF INSIGHTS REGARDING PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH ONE OR MORE PERSONS OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY, ETC.

LEONARD

The Alpha and Omega Christian Community of Manitoba continues its discussions on John of the Cross, 16th century Spanish Carmelite friar, Doctor of Mystical Theology.

For further information contact Leonard Schmidt 204-487-3553

Excerpts

Excerpt from Joshua: A Parable for Today by Joseph F. Girzone

God never intended that religion become what it is today. Jesus came on earth to try to free people from that kind of regimented religion where people are threatened if they don't obey rules and rituals invented by the clergy. Jesus came to teach people that they are God's children and, as God's children, they are free, free to grow as human beings, to become beautiful people as God intended. That can't be legislated. Jesus gave the apostles and the community as a support to provide help and guidance and consolation. Jesus did not envision bosses in a worldly sense. He wanted his apostles to guide and serve, not to dictate and legislate like those who govern this world. Unfortunately, religious leaders model themselves after civil governments and treat people accordingly. In doing this they fall into the same trap that the scribes and Pharisees fell into, making religion a tangible set of measurable religious observances, which is legalistic and superficial. In doing this they became the focus of religious observance rather than God, and it is their endless rules and their rituals rather than the love of God and concern for others that occupy the people's attention.

Customs and practices and traditions then replace true service of God, and these become a serious obstacle to real growth in the love of God. If people take religious leaders too seriously, they become rigid in their thinking and afraid to think for themselves, and must always refer decisions to the clergy.... The prophets of old were such great men. They had the boldness to see beyond the limitations of human religious traditions and provide guidance to God's people. They had the courage to break out of the sterile rigidness of religious forms, and incurred the wrath of religious leaders who hated them for this, and persecuted them, even killing some of them in the name of religion. Religious leaders constantly fall into this pitfall of wanting to control religion and people's practice of religion, and not allowing people to think for themselves for fear they will lose control over them.

p.73 Macmillan Publishing Co.

Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, Maximos IV Saigh, took part in the Second Vatican Council. He repeated often that Latinism and Catholicism are not synonymous.

In their report from Rome during the Council Eugene H. Maly and Barnabas M. Ahern C.P. noted that "Maximos IV Saigh insisted that the Latin Church must still be converted to a true catholicity."

"The Bible Today", November 1965

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

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 2009 (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

