



The Journal



April - June 2014



Earth Prayer

*Live lightly and respectfully on
the planet
To bring new life to the land
To restore the waters
To refresh the air
To renew the forests
To care for the plants
To protect the creatures
To celebrate the seas
To rejoice in the sunlight
To sing the song of the stars
To recreate the human
community
To promote justice and peace
To remember our children.*

*Extract from the U.N.
Environmental Sabbath
Program
quoted in Prayers for Healing
edited by Maggie Oman*

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: trumpetgod@shaw.ca

Publisher

Xristos Community Society
35-10070 Fifth Street, Sidney, BC V8L 2X9

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From The Joy of the Gospel by Pope Francis'

#35. Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. When we adopt a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually reach everyone without exception or exclusion, the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.



Diane Peck wrote the following in her article about transcendence:
This story is told of Pope John XXIII:

He was replying to someone who was having a problem with insomnia: “The very same thing happened to me in the first few weeks of my Pontificate, he said, but then one day my guardian angel appeared to me in a daydream and whispered, ‘Giovanni, don’t take yourself so seriously’. And ever since then I’ve been able to sleep.”

We know that the path of discipleship is narrow and it is hard to find.
On either side of the path, deep chasms yawn.
To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious to it, is indeed a narrow way.
To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus,
and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth
with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer



About Feminist Theology, *Frank Sarton* from Duncan, BC wrote:

For many people, the question “What is feminism?” has little meaning apart from the self-evident ‘having to do with all that is female’ or ‘matters pertaining to women’. At the very least, many would agree that a feminist is one who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their gender, that women have specific needs which remain negated in our church and elsewhere in society, and that the satisfaction of those needs require a radical change in the social, political, and religious spheres.

The oldest Marian prayer is the Sub Tuum/We fly to thy patronage. It goes back to third century AD Egypt. Before that in Egypt, the title 'Mother of God' had designated Isis, mother of Horus. Coptic christians in the third century gave the title, Theotokos, to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

In 431, the Council of Ephesus gave Mary this title.

This prayer is Egypt's gift to us:

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus,

Sancta Dei Genetrix;

nostras deprecationes ne despicias

in necessitatibus nostris

ised a periculas cunctis libera nos semper

Virgo gloriosa et benedicta

We fly to thy patronage,

Holy Mother of God

despise not our prayers

in our necessities

but deliver us always from all dangers

Glorious and blessed Virgin

Ed and Minda Kelly sent the following Manilla Report on the Conference of the Philippine Federation of Family Priests organized by the Mindano Group:

“**W**e had 80 couples with their children. Our Federation here is still very much alive. Our youth had their own meetings and reported their apostolate: teaching catechism, supporting the apostolate of their parents and gaining acceptance in everyday life as children in Roman Catholic Married priest Families.”

Is It Suffering Or Restlessness?

by *Hank Mattimore, Santa Rosa, CA*



A while back a Buddhist corrected me when I called the central truth about Buddhism is that we are all born into suffering. "Suffering" as we

understand the word in English, doesn't capture what we mean," he said. "Restlessness rather than suffering better captures the Buddhist teaching." Whether his interpretation represents the essence of Buddhism or not, I am not qualified to judge but it makes sense to me. Sort of reminds me of St. Augustine's "Our hearts are made for Thee, O Lord, and can not rest until they rest in Thee." We are a restless bunch, we humans, dissatisfied with ourselves, if

the truth were known. In our heads, we acknowledge that we will never be completely satisfied with, well, anything. Let's face it. We're not the perfect parents we hoped to be, not the endearing spouse; nor did we marry the perfect spouse or have perfect kids. We haven't made as much money or learned as much or traveled as far as we dreamed. And on and on... We know the drill. Man o Man. Our lives aren't living up to our dreams. C'mon admit it. Our lives teeter between near disaster and disaster.

Except they don't and we don't. Our lives are not a mess. The restlessness we feel is built in to our human condition. Wisdom lies in accepting ourselves with all our warts and just keep on truckin', doing the best we can with what we have. The alternative is to drown in a fruitless grit-your-teeth kind of striving for a happiness just beyond our reach.

I respect the ideals of the poet who called us to be "The masters of our fate and the captains of our soul," but I don't see many masters or captains around my world. I see mostly ordinary blokes just trying to carve out a life for themselves.

So mates, we will be well served if we can just sort of relax in our imperfections. Be kind to others; pet your doggy; hug your loved ones (even old Uncle Charlie). God loves us just as we are.

One Story - Not Two

by *Charles Callanan, St. John's, NL*



It is fifty seven years after his death and Teilhard de Chardin is still causing problems for the Vatican. I suspect that this situation will not end quickly. For some reason or another, people who put science and Catholic

theology in the same bed are considered trouble makers. Yet there is really only one creation story and not two; just as there is really one reality and not two. I have no problem with the issue. I accept the fact that God originally created the "everything seed" and that in the beginning this seed flared out (the big bang) and started everything that we now see and experience.

Consciousness began with animals long before man came into being. It is only SELF consciousness that marked the beginning of humans on earth. Some writer explains it like this. "A horse looks in a mirror and he sees another animal. I look into a mirror and see myself." It seems logical that with the development of self consciousness, hundreds or thousands of humans appeared at once,

not only Adam and Eve.

According to the book of Genesis, after he had killed his brother, Cain "had intercourse with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch" (Gen. 4,17). Where did this woman come from? We presume she was not his own sister from Eve. When I was a student it was explained to me that, "The Bible is not a book about how the heavens go but a book about how to go to heaven". Whereas I thought that this was a clever explanation, it completely dodges the relationship between science and theology.

Last week my wife and I attended a two day seminar about "the new cosmology" offered by the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. It was held here in St. John's Newfoundland. Sister Donna Geernaer had done her doctoral thesis on Teilhard. She says, "what is being challenged by the new cosmology is not the Christian message in itself but the static categories of thought in which it has been proclaimed over so many years".

Our issues are with the "static categories of thought" into which our beliefs have been frozen. Writers of the new cosmology have rethought the creation stories as presented by science and theology and find no contradiction between them.

I feel sure that young university students and all young people would be willing to rethink their early training in religion if all this material were to be explained to them. They would be less likely to reject the Church out of hand as many have done.

There are very intelligent men at the Vatican. Why is it a problem for them to endorse evolution as part of the Christian story?

Melchizedek

by Chris Diamond, Cobble Hill, BC



For some months this year, Christus Duncan has enjoyed wrestling with the so-called Paul's Letter to the Hebrews (Heb). It is a so-called letter because it is no longer looked upon by most scripture scholars

as a letter nor was it written by Paul. It is an exhortation, a homily urging diaspora Judean Christians, likely in Alexandria, a Hellenist centre of Platonism and the home city of Philo the Judean, not to abandon the way that earlier followers of Jesus understood Jesus anointed by God and how this messianic understanding developed. The upheaval in the social lives of new Alexandrian Christians was causing many to abandon their new messianism (faith in Jesus Christ) and to return to their former Old Testament (OT) traditional beliefs. Some were being criticized, arrested, and their possessions confiscated. It was not a good time to be a follower of Jesus among non-followers.

While Heb is a difficult text to read, thanks to the explanations of scripture scholars, we learned much from our study about the context of the text; the titles that Jesus was given - such as the source, apostle of God, pioneer, the guarantee of God's faithfulness, shepherd, forerunner of human destiny, and so on; Heb contrasts the ideas that if things were good or great in the past, Christians are much better off in these times; Jesus is messiah son of God, the link uniting God with the people; Jesus is better than the prophets, Abraham, Moses, or David, and even the angels. In a world where rulers and planets were addressed as gods and divine, the Christ is far above them all. Jesus is the end-time priestly Christ, the new high priest, the fulfillment of the prophecies. Heb 1,5-14 quotes from the Septuagint (LXX) a chain of statements to show Jesus' place:

"For to which of the angels did he ever say 'Son, you are mine; today I have begotten you?' Or again: 'I will be to him for a father, and he shall be to me for a son?'"

A son is forever; winds and fire are transitory. God's angels and ministers are fleeting "winds and flames." The son messiah/Christ loves righteousness and hates evil; God has anointed him. The son seated now at God's right hand is greater than all, and he shares the coming world household with the Father forever; angels and spirits are no longer God's go-betweens with humanity.

Using Judean tradition, the writer of the 'Letter' to the Hebrews (Heb) gives two special titles for Jesus: son and high priest "according to the type of Melchizedek", not because of the bread and wine offering but because of Jesus' life dedicated to God's Way. (I do not recall ever learning much about Melchizedek in my preordination studies. I did know a little - mostly stressing the bread and wine offering.) For Jesus' priest title, the author applies Genesis 14.18 and Ps.110, 4. Mitchell Dahood's translation of the Hebrew states that

Malki Sedeq, Malki Salem means King priest of the Eternal One, King priest of peace. As was the custom of the time, the king was a God-given priest to his people. In time, popular Israelite folklore named him Melchizedek.

Malki Sedeq first appears in Genesis 14,18 when Abram (later renamed Abraham) returns from defeating the kings who had opposed him: "Malki Sedeq Malki Salem brought out bread and wine and as a priest of God Most High he blessed Abram with these words: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High who delivered your foes into

your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything." Gen.14,18-20

No one knew Malki Sedeq's name, nor his parents' names, nor where he came from, nor where he went after he blessed Abram. Abram acknowledged him and paid him the tithe tribute. In the later Israelite story honouring Israel's king, Ps.110,4 sings "You are a priest of the Eternal according to his pact;/ His legitimate king, my lord; according to your right hand." Psalms 101-150 by Mitchell Dahood, The Anchor Bible 17A Nowhere does it say that Malki Sedeq is a "priest for ever" It is God who is the Eternal One The Forever One. Malki Sedeq is the legitimate king priest of the Eternal - "el elyon" of Ps.110. There is nothing in Genesis either to indicate that Malki Sedeq remained "for ever". (Fitzmeyer) In Israelite folklore, Melchizedek gave priesthood to Abram who passed it on to the Levitical priesthood who were "in Abraham's loins" already when he was blessed. (Heb 7,10)

In Heb several times Jesus is called "high priest until the age" (that is, until God's kairos and the future age or "for ever"). It is Jesus who is affirmed by God, "seated at God's right hand". Before Heb was written, New Testament writers were reluctant to call Jesus a priest so as not to associate him with the Levitical priesthood. Heb, however, depicts Jesus' priesthood in the light of his total humanity, his acceptance of the reality of suffering and death (which is the lot of being human), and his dedication to God's Kingdom. God raised him up after his death on the cross making him "the first-born of the dead". As a total human being and on behalf of all, Jesus stood before God and offered his whole dedicated life as fitting worship/sacrifice, and God seated him "at his right hand"; "with glory and honour, you crowned him and you subjected all things (all earthly and angelic creation) under his feet." Heb 2,7&8

The institution of King priests faded away. Heb was written to contrast the Israelite and the Christian beliefs and to show that Jesus, God's unique son, is greater than all the OT angels and prophets who had gone before him. From the traditions of the past, Christians moved forward to new life partly in the "coming world", their "real" home, God's 'house', present here and now but yet to come and to be completed. Jesus messiah/Christ is their leader into the new age (Heb 2:5). Christian worship is worship of thanks and praise to God; it shares in anointed Jesus' praise and worship at God's right hand. To repeat, Christian worship is now part of Jesus' worship in heaven; on earth, Jesus' actions were faithful to God and loving towards people whose condition he shared; in other

Melchizedek Continued...

words, Jesus is priest. He took our worship and all our failures with him to God.

Heb exhorts the community to follow Jesus and do as he had done Heb 13. However, Christians are also part of the first age, the age of creation, with all its human institutions and the other characteristics that belong to it (national and civic politics, temples, priesthoods, religious rules, God's gifts, good things, suffering, and death). Heb sets out to reveal present external sacramentalism as only a shadow of worship in the real age and it reminds them: "Today, hear the Awesome One when he proclaims 'Harden not your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness.'" Ps. 94,7 LXX
Jesus learned from the things that he experienced; he listened carefully; he worshipped God and, by God's action, he rescued those

who also listened Heb 5,9.

During the 25 years and more that Christus Duncan has been gathering weekly for the study of Holy Scripture (initially under the initiative of the pastors of the Anglican parish of St. Peter's, Quamichan) we have studied to unlock what the writers were writing and the hearers hearing. We have maintained our catholic mind - in its best sense - and remained ecumenical. We have not focused on what each of us should, could, or would do with the insights that have come to us as we wrestled sometimes with difficult texts. Inevitably there has been discussion of Church history and what the scriptures mean to us today. Simply put: We listen carefully to the Word; to one another; we eat together with joy; and in our imperfect way, we praise God with thanks.

Firm Hearts

by *Jim Lauder, Victoria, BC*

I want to start with the biblical context of John 14,15-21. Luther Seminary Director and author David Lose notes, "that given we are in the Easter season, it may help to remind our hearers that in John's story it is Thursday, the evening before the crucifixion. After sharing a meal with his disciples and offering them an example of selfless love and service, Jesus is now preparing them for his departure. He is about to leave them and they are distressed. This is what the threat of loss does -- it shakes up our sense of safety and security. In response, he has already told them not to worry, that he was going away to prepare a place for them. But they are still upset, for the fear of loss is not so easily defeated. And so he tells them that he will not leave them orphaned, abandoned, or alone.

Instead, he will send to them an Advocate, the Holy Spirit; 'paracletos', often translated "advocate" can have several overlapping meanings. It can function in a legal sense, meaning literally one who advocates for you before a court of law. And it can function more relationally by designating one who brings help, consolation, comfort, and encouragement. All of these however, derive from the most basic meaning of the word to "come along side another." (www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?m=4377&post=3226)

Put simply, the Spirit of truth, or the Holy Spirit is "God as spirituality active in the world." <http://en.wikipedia.org> I most like what one priest wrote, "It is the gift of love infused into us when" ... we are open and receiving. It is "a love that unites, and a love that is a common language we can speak to all nations." The Church's Year of Grace, Pius Parsch

And who is the Holy Spirit? Mechtild of Magdeburg, a Benedictine nun and medieval mystic writes,

"The Holy Spirit is a compassionate outpouring of the Creator and the Son." (p.293) Original Blessing, Matthew Fox

Pope Francis, "in his daily mass homily on May 19th entitled, Fix Your Heart Firmly on the Holy Spirit, noted that Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit... "will teach us all things" and "remind us of everything" and also the Holy Spirit "gives us strength, [and] gives us steadiness to be able to move forward in life in the midst of many events." Francis challenged his audience to, "ask themselves, what kind of heart do they have? Is it a heart that is scarred by the vicissitudes of life and is hiding and afraid to give witness to Jesus

Christ? Or is it a heart fixed on the Holy Spirit?" (National Catholic Register, Elise Harris/CNA/EWTN NEWS, posted 5/19/14)

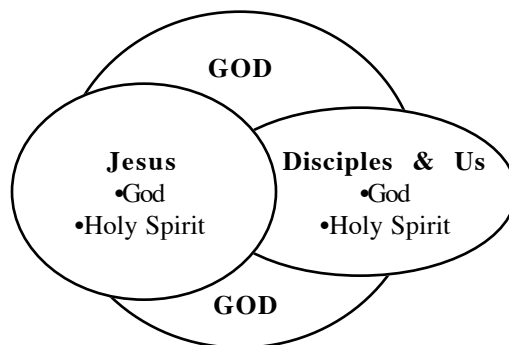
As I reflect on those questions, and today's gospel I believe Jesus offers his disciples such reassurance when he says, "You can recognize the Spirit because she remains with you and will be with you" and then he goes on to say, "I won't leave you orphaned, I will come back to you."

I think Jesus is speaking about immortality, in the form of modelling to the disciples his way of living and his profound relationship to God. The impact that Jesus had on his disciples "lives on" and Jesus reassures them that they "will live as well." He adds, "on that day you'll know I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you." This verse inspired me to think of three circles that intersect and form a trinity of friendship or love. A large circle containing God, another circle that represents Jesus, and another that contains the disciples and us. The intersection of all three, form a perfect union in the centre that I would call, The Holy Spirit.

I believe it is our faithfulness and love for compassion and loving that binds us to Jesus, and to God and to each other. And as we journey through life what a wonderful question that Pope Francis invites us to ask, "Is my heart firmly fixed on the Holy Spirit?" or "is it fixed on upon everyday Gods?"

Take a moment to fix our hearts on the Holy Spirit and "come along side another" as we continue to share with each other our thoughts and experiences.

Biblical references from The New Inclusive Testament.



Part 2: Book Review: Can We Save The Catholic Church?

by Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK



In the previous issue of the Journal I summarized briefly Hans Küng's analysis of the three outstanding features that mark the Roman system and which seriously need reform, namely:

- a centralist, absolutist papacy;
- clerical juridicism; and
- obligatory celibacy for the clergy.

In this report I will write about Küng's description of six paradigm shifts in Christianity.

"The notion of historical paradigms of church life and the analysis of what happens when in the history of the Church a new paradigm arises to threaten the prevailing pattern of church life is one of Hans Küng's most important contributions to the study of church history and indeed to religious studies generally." (p. 339).

Paradigm 1. "The apocalyptic, primitive Christian model of the earliest days of the Church, as reflected in the New Testament and other documents of the first and early second centuries." (p.339)

Paradigm 2. "The Hellenistic model of the Church that took form especially in the East during the patristic period from the second to the sixth centuries; from this pattern, in growing isolation and alienation from the Western Church, today's Orthodox churches eventually emerged." (p. 340).

Paradigm 3. "The Medieval Latin Catholic model, which had already begun to take form in the Western Church in the early centuries but only later, in increasing alienation from the Eastern Church and increasing concentration on the papal office, achieved its definitive character in the eleventh to fifteenth centuries; from this Medieval pattern the Roman Catholic Church emerged as we know it today." (ibid.).

Paradigm 4. The Protestant Reformation model born in the sixteenth century; from this pattern the modern Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and other evangelical churches emerged, especially in northern Europe and in North America. In southern Europe, by contrast, a distinctive Counter-Reformation model of Roman Catholicism emerged." (ibid.).

Paradigm 5. The Enlightenment model, which took shape over the course of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and is marked by a progressive secularization of civil life, the replacement of autocratic and aristocratic regimes by liberal democracy and a generally optimistic view of the achievements of human reason and science. Within the churches, the Enlightenment gave rise to a split between liberal and conservative movements, with the result that anti-Modernist counter-models emerged, often allied with anti-democratic and anti-liberal social and political movements bent on defending or restoring former autocratic power structures and lost privileges." (p. 340-341).

Paradigm 6. As the twentieth century moves into the twenty-first century, a new Postmodern, ecumenical model is beginning to emerge in response to contemporary challenges. This pattern holds out hope of overcoming the divisions and enmities of the past and of bringing forth forms of Christian life and church structure suited to the modern age. (p. 341).

Signs of Hope for Union with the East

At his visit to the Holy Land, Pope Francis met with the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I at the Holy Sepulchre on May 25 this year and he expressed his feeling to, "...reiterate my hope... for a continued dialogue with all my brothers and sisters in Christ, aimed at finding a means of exercising the specific ministry of the Bishop of Rome which, in fidelity to his mission, can be open to a new situation and can be, in the present context, a service of love and of communion acknowledged by all".

Synodal form of governance

"From the moment of his election, Pope Francis depicted his mandate in the terms of the early Eastern doctor St. Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote of the Roman See as "presiding in charity" among the churches as opposed to the modern entity whose occupant holds what Canon Law terms "full, immediate, universal and ordinary" jurisdiction over the Catholic world". (Rocco Palmo at: <http://whispersintheloggia>).

Pope Francis promises to read Küng's book

"During recent months it has become clear that Pope Francis is striving for serious reform within the Catholic Church... The Pope has already made some important steps: first of all he appointed a group of eight cardinals from all continents with the mandate to initiate the reform of the Roman Curia.

Because of this development, I felt encouraged to send this book in Spanish to Pope Francis, and I was privileged to receive a personal, fraternal handwritten letter from him, in which he promises to read this book. I also sent the book, in their respective languages, to the eight cardinals". (p. xi).

It is impossible to do justice to the contents and the spirit of this book by Hans Küng. The pages between the three outstanding features of the Roman System and the six paradigm shifts are full of fascinating stories and interesting facts, that only a full read of this great book can one experience the pleasure of meeting the mind of this great man.

Stories From St. Brigid's In Calgary

by *Monica Kilburn-Smith, RWCP, priest/pastor of St. Brigid's, Calgary, AB*

Introduction: The Way of Pilgrimage

St. Brigid's Catholic Faith Community is growing and thriving in Calgary, and proud to be part of the larger circle, like Corpus, of church and faith renewal in Canada and around the world. Our community members have many gifts and interests and ministries. Wendy Johansson and Chris Smith, are two wonderful friends of St. Brigid's; each has a story of pilgrimage to share in this issue of the Corpus Journal.

Chris has created a beautiful walking ministry that brings joy and inspiration to many. She leads pilgrimage walks, that she has designed, through a natural environment park in Calgary, Nose Hill Park. (For Chris, it is 'Knows Hill.')

Many years ago, Chris responded to a vision and an inspiration from God to create these walks through Nose Hill, a place she know as sacred and full of divine revelation. Her most recent pilgrimage walk is called "Our Lady of Roses Celebration." To me, Chris's embodied response to the natural landscape near her home, which has revealed its sacred dimensions to her, and her design of these pilgrimage walks in response to that call of the land, speaks of human beings' ancient connection to the earth we come from and live upon. This is how God has always spoken to us - through the natural world - if we but have eyes to see, ears to hear, and bodies to fully enter into the mystery of the natural world around us.

These words of mine are not really doing justice to Chris's creativity and mystical awareness - please visit her website www.knowshill.com to see photos, read her stories, and know more about this unique ministry, especially her devotion to our Divine Mother. The prayer words of St. Augustine come to my mind when I consider Chris's offering to the world: "Oh Beauty, so ancient and so

new."

Wendy is a dear friend with whom I used to dance many years ago, and Wendy has shared her dancing and choreography with St. Brigid's during two celebrations - on Palm Sunday this year, and last year, during a particular time of communal grief, when many people in St. Brigid's were experiencing sorrow due to the death of a loved one and other difficult life events. Wendy's beautiful spirit and prayerful dancing extends a sense of hope and joy to all around her, and she has enriched our community life with her embodied prayers. Wendy has also recently completed a book called *Hallelujah: A Story of Cancer, Love and Grace*, which describes her pilgrimage through a difficult but holy time - being with her father through his illness and death, and her walk through the landscape of grief. Just as Wendy brings light and love to our community, so she spreads that light and love further into the world through this book which reveals in so many ways, her devotion to, and faith in, family, God, and indeed Love itself. It is a faith she asks us to share in - to remember that, no matter what, we are never alone; God's Spirit is with us, telling us 'Do not fear,' and leading the way. I think of these lines from Isaiah 43 when I read Wendy's story: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned." When I think of Wendy's story, I am reminded of these lines from Psalm 30: "You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."

Getting Creative With God

by *Wendy Johansson, Calgary, AB*



Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory (William Barclay)

Isaiah 43: 1-7: *...when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God*

What would you do if God suggested that

you write a book? You'd write it, wouldn't you? Well, that's what happened to me. I wrote a manuscript in 2011 about my father's

journey with prostate cancer and my journey with God through it all. I first had the idea to write this book when I was watching a Christian television program and a scripture from the book of Isaiah was written across the screen. I made an entry in my God journal that read: *January 17, 2011: Write a book about my experience with Dad and God. Title: "Hallelujah"* When I wrote that, it felt like the book was God's idea and the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding me. The scripture encapsulated my experience with God and my dad's cancer journey. God carried me through that season and I praise Him for it because otherwise, I wouldn't have made it - at least not so unscathed. I walked through the fire and it did not consume me...because of God's Grace. Hallelujah.

Excerpts from Wendy's book *Hallelujah: A Story of Cancer, Love and Grace*

Introduction:

The only story that God cannot use is the one that is not shared. -Unknown

This is a story about my dad. This is a story about my family. This is a story about cancer. This is a story about love. But most of all, this is a story

Getting Creative With God Continued...

about God's Grace. Hallelujah.

This is a story about my journey with my dad's cancer diagnosis. It is a story about blessing out of brokenness. I believe, as many do, that in every blessing there is a burden and in every burden, there is a blessing. My life is completely blessed but there are times when I think the burden of all that blessing just might take me down. Each blessing, whether it is in the form of a spouse, a baby or child, a job, an opportunity, a ministry, a relationship, or a home, comes with the work required to maintain it – both a blessing and a burden. And the challenging times we face are both burdens and blessings. As we walk through the fire, we can arrive at a new point in our spiritual journey, stronger and closer to God.

I think many people will understand my story and relate to it in some way, especially people who have experienced illness or the death of a loved one. And especially people who have walked with cancer somewhere on their journey. And especially people who have some belief in a higher power. Tielhard De Jardin, a philosopher and Jesuit priest, once said, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

People often ask why God allows bad things to happen to good people. I don't believe that God is hanging around deciding which bad thing to give to which good person next. I believe there are many variables in our grand universe. But fundamentally, I believe the difficult or so-called bad things that happen to us provide us with great opportunities to grow personally, grow in faith, and grow closer to God. Adversity and suffering give us the opportunity to build strength and grow spiritually. And I have often thought that God has more capacity to be with us in the valleys, although I must admit I really do like the mountaintops.

Perhaps God is more likely to be with us in the valleys because we are more likely to seek, turn to, or invite God to be with us during hard times. Then God can shine His light on us, around us, and through us for His glory or glorious joy. Or "glory-us" joy. Under the burden of adversity, God can bless us in many different ways. Carol Kent, in her book *Between a Rock and a Grace Place*, discusses how God gives us divine surprises and splashes of joy when we are walking with heavy burdens. Her words encourage us to hold on to hope because we always have choices. Sometimes that is difficult to remember when you are in the valley but in my case, with the burden I was under, God's blessing was easy to see and easy to feel. Hallelujah!

There are many things you learn in the darkness that you cannot learn in the light. -Unknown

We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world. -Helen Keller

On August 15, 2010, my husband and kids and I went to my sister Katherine's house for dinner to celebrate my nephew Mark's birthday.

When we arrived, Dad wasn't there, which was very unusual. Mom told us that he wasn't coming. He had gone to the hospital earlier that day due to issues with constipation. In the moment that I heard that, I felt like God told me, "This is going to be bad." It wasn't an audible voice that I heard. God has yet to speak to me with an audible voice. Perhaps one day – I look forward to that. The thought was quite strong and didn't seem to be my own. Some, including me, would say it was the voice of the Holy Spirit.

And as the realization that this might be bad, began to sink in, I wanted to stand in a prayer circle and pray for my dad but I knew this might come off as a little too alarmist or extreme for my family. Constipation didn't seem like a serious issue but seemingly God had just told me that it was. So I sat through dinner feeling a little stunned. I had a flashback to more than two months earlier. My mom and I had travelled to Montreal together for my grandmother's funeral. When my uncle asked my mom, "How's John doing?" Mom replied, "He's not a well man." Her comment caught me off guard. I had had no idea that was the case, and I had had no idea then how right she was - perhaps neither had she. Dad had a history of heart issues but overall I had thought of him as being in pretty good health for a man seventy-six years old.

So at that dinner, stunned by my dad's absence, stunned by God's revelation, I started to try to prepare myself for what was to come - even though I had no idea how to do that and no idea of what was actually to come. That was the beginning of my dad's illness, at least for me. I knew God was with me and that I would not walk alone. Hallelujah!

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I wish the story had ended with: *...and right when he was on the brink of death, God healed my dad. Dad is alive and healthy today, cancer-free!*

This would have been a fantastic ending to my story. It would have been an especially fantastic ending for my mom and our family, but what I like to remember is that the reality was a fantastic ending for my dad. He is now with Our Father in Heaven. Hallelujah.

Perhaps, to some who read this story, it won't seem like there was anything miraculous involved. After all, my dad died. God did not heal his physical body. However, I feel that God's presence with me throughout the ten-week ordeal was a divine gift in my life. I can't speak for the rest of my family, or for Dad, but I felt God's Love and Grace around me so much of the time, in a way I never had before. I felt like I was walking in a bubble of God's Grace that whole time. And I still feel surrounded by His Grace. There were times when I thought I could feel people praying for me. That was powerful! I had never felt that before.

I experienced "Footprints in the Sand" – God carried me through the most difficult time of my life. I didn't have to reach for His hand or ask Him to carry me or help me. God was there. God reached for my hand before I reached or looked for His. God acted like we hope our spouses and best friends will act in a crisis. We hope they will anticipate our needs before we even realize we

Getting Creative With God Continued...

have them. It was true Grace and the most beautiful gift!

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As far as people and personal strength go, I would have to say that I'm not that strong of a person. My life has been relatively easy. It is through adversity and challenging times that we grow stronger and develop our ability to cope in difficult times. Prior to my dad's illness I would have said that going through this kind of adversity would have crushed me and I never would have had the strength to cope. In fact, I have often joked that I could be on the verge of a nervous breakdown if I discover I have run out of milk or raisin bran. Although not entirely true it is a recognition of the life stage I have been in for the past ten or fifteen years, my standing on the precipice of burnout in 2001, my less than stellar adrenal glands, my lack of resiliency, and my lack of ability to cope with either mountains or mole hills.

It was such a surprise to find out that God would carry me through the entire experience - carrying me in His Grace every step of the way. This was easily the most difficult season in my life but God made it so much lighter and easier than I ever could have imagined He could. That was the power of God's Grace! Hallelujah.

In my experience with the toughest season of my life, I experienced an outpouring of God's love into my heart. I felt so blessed because I didn't even have to ask God to walk with me. It felt like He was just there walking with me, sometimes even carrying me. I didn't have to reach out my hand to God for Him to take it. As soon as I moved my hand, I realized God's hand was already there reaching out to me before I even knew I would need to grab it. It was a dual, dichotomous experience: it was hard and painful but I was buffered. It was as if I lived in a bubble of God's Grace, wrapped around me, protecting me, propping me up so I wouldn't fall. Hallelujah!

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Be still and know that I am God. -Psalm 46:10

We are meant to listen more than we talk. That is why God gave us two ears and only one mouth.

-Unknown

They say (the elusive "they") that if you lose someone close to you, someone you love, someone from your inner circle, then you have an angel in Heaven. And I am sure that I do.

When you are in a close relationship with someone on Earth such as a spouse, parent, or close friend, you can become closer to that person, as well as to God, when you both have a faith. You become three points on a triangle - moving closer to one point can move you closer to the other point in the triangle. And I believe you can still experience this God triangle with a person in Heaven as well. It seems my dad's closeness to God has brought me closer as well.

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During the time of my Dad's passing, I felt closer to God and closer to Heaven. I said a few times, I feel like I have stood at the portal of the heaven and experienced God's Grace streaming through.

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I wonder if there are small miracles around us every day and we just don't see them. Do we have the ears to hear and the eyes to see? The experience of the past year has reinforced my belief that growing closer to God is like developing a sixth sense - you need to develop your ability to listen, hear, and discern. I think most Christians understand this to varying degrees, and we frequently talk about the biblical verse, "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10). The adventure with God has impacted me so strongly that I could almost be still and be with God listening and knowing all day long. Hallelujah!

Celebrating Mother Mary, The Divine Feminine In The Beauty Of Nature *by Chris Smith, Calgary, AB*



Since 2008, every May 31st on Nose Hill Park in Calgary, Alberta, a beautiful Ceremony is held to honour the Divine Mother.

Childhood memories of a parade devoted to Mother Mary in Windsor, Ontario inspired me to create our Lady of Roses Celebration for my young granddaughter, Ashlyn. Nose Hill

Park became a spiritual haven for me when I moved here from Ontario in 1978 into a house directly across the street from Nose Hill. Over the years, I created a story and a Spiritual Journey, a pilgrimage, which I

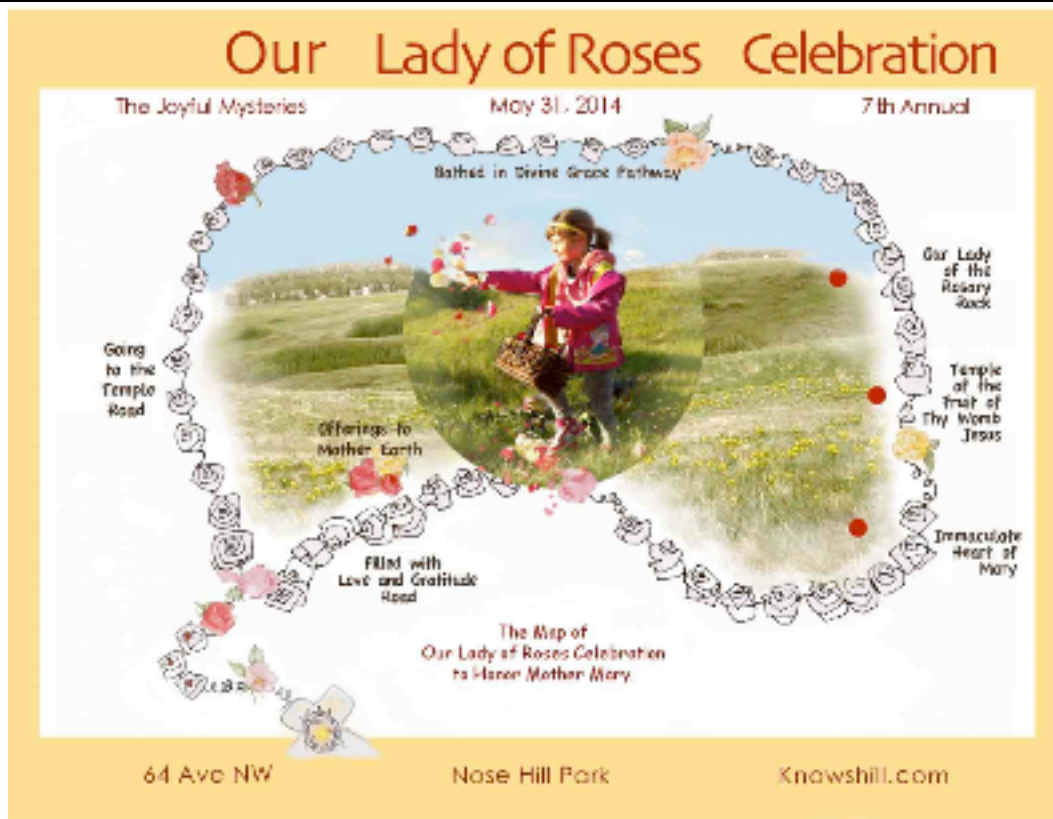
take people on through the park. I call it The Legend of Knows Hill.

In The Legend of Knows Hill, there is an area in the park which represents the Divine Feminine. This became the perfect place for Our Lady of Roses Celebration.

The preparation time before the actual ceremony has become an integral part of the ceremony. Participants come together to make the Rosary from roses, the Cross of the Roses and Lilies, the heart made with White Roses to represent the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the gathering of the Sacred Objects that will adorn the altars to be made on the hill -- including a doll that Ashlyn insists on bringing to represent baby Jesus.

It is a Joyous time as all walk up Going to the Temple Road to partake in this prayerful time to honour Our Divine Mother of Heaven and Earth. Being in the elements of nature is at the centre of this Holy Experience.

Go to www.knowshill.com to view past Our Lady of Roses Celebrations and read my Fairy Tale, "The Temple of Our Lady of Roses."



Our Lady of Roses 7th Annual Celebration

The Ancient Sacred Gift of the Rosary

The Blessed Virgin gave us the rosary, beads formed from dried roses strung together to represent the events of the life of her son, Jesus. Each bead is a prayer to Mary, Our Holy Mother, honoring her and asking her help.

Bring: Roses, Rosaries and instructions available. Dress in layers.

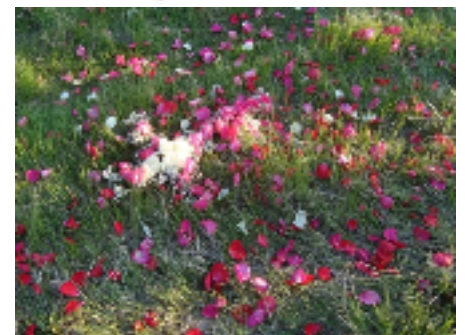
Meeting Place: Nose Hill at the 64th Ave parking lot on 14th St NW.

Time: Saturday, May 31st, 6:00 pm.....approx 2.5 hrs.

All are Welcome!

Chris Smith: knows_hill@hotmail.com

*** All Donations go to St. Henry's School Playground ***



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 Contacts

Francois Brassard: Victoria, BC

Email: ckfb@shaw.ca

Chris Diamond: Cobble Hill, BC

Email: diamondcnf@shaw.ca

Joe Gubbels: Edmonton, AB

Email: jgubbs@shaw.ca

John Palardy: Calgary, AB

Email: palardy@shaw.ca

Jim Lynn: Yellowknife, NT

Tel: (867) 873-8529

Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK

Email: emil@kutarna.net

Leonard Schmidt, Winnipeg, MB

Email: adeline.leonard.schmidt@shaw.ca

Roman Catholic Womanpriests (RWCP) Contacts

Priest, Michele Birch Conery

#1103 140 Bridge Avenue

Windsor, ON, NN9BB3R0

Tel: (519) 962-7016; Email: liberata999@gmail.com

www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org

Priest, James A. Lauder

St. Iris Faith Community, Victoria, BC

Tel: (250) 519-0055; Email: jimlauder@telus.net

Priest, Victoria Marie

Our Lady of Guadalupe Tonantzin Community

Vancouver, BC

Tel: (604) 339-6413; Email: Sistersea@gmail.com

www.vancouvercatholicworker.org

Priest, Monica Kilburn-Smith

St. Brigid's Community, Calgary, AB

Tel: (403) 256-3408; Email: gemstones@shaw.ca

www.saintbrigid.org

Priest, Rose Mewhort

Chapel of Sts. Clare and Francis, Mayne Island, BC

Contact: Patricia Fitzgerald

grandmas@saltspring.com

Phone: 250-539-5310

Priest, Kim Sylvester

Gatineau, QC

kim.sylvester@videotron.ca

Phone: 819-931-4400

How Can I Join Or Show Support?

If you wish to join or renew your membership in Corpus Canada for the year 2013 (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.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE JOURNAL

If you would like to support 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. Or by PayPal (see link on website)

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 Web Site Manager

Michael Irving

Email: trumpetgod@shaw.ca