



The Journal



January - March 2015

Excerpts from "Room For The Sacred" in *Did I Say That?*

By John L. McKenzie

More than forty years ago, John L. McKenzie then “America’s outstanding Catholic theologian and biblical scholar” spoke out candidly about the “hard questions”. Among them was the Catholic Church’s understanding and practice of what is "The Sacred". The following are some of his opinions gleaned from his experience as a catholic scholar:

The sacred was known in Israel and Judaism; Israel had sacred places...the deity could be worshipped there. Israel had sacred times, the festivals... Israel had its sacred personnel, obscure in its origin and history, but issuing in the Aaronic priesthood which served in what became the only sacred place of Judaism, the temple of Jerusalem.

Greek and Roman religions had sacred places, times, and persons... like Israelite and Judaism, thoroughly typical in the manifestation and use of the sacred. No value judgment about the sacred is implied.

However, McKenzie continues: we do not sufficiently attend to the degree to which primitive apostolic Christianity... departs from the pattern of the sacred both in Judaism and in Hellenistic religion. The Greek word for “priest” is used of no church officer in the New Testament, and it is dishonest to say that the New Testament has the equivalent. The priest was a known cultic officer of a distinct character; the apostolic church did not use this word because it had no cultic office to which to apply it. The church in its origins had no sacred personnel... not in the Jewish, Greek, nor modern sense... the apostolic church had no sacred places... oddly enough the cemeteries were the first places to become sacred. Paul recognized no Christian temple except the body of the individual believer (1 Corinthians 6:19); wherever the Christian is, there is a sacred place... Of sacred times we may say simply that we know of no sacred days or seasons in the apostolic church.

The Catholic Church did not get its sacred places and its sacred personnel from the New Testament. It got them from the religious symbolism of Judaism and Hellenistic-Roman paganism. Our churches and the liturgical pageantry carried on inside them continue the ritual of the Jerusalem temple and the Roman temples... If we need the apparatus of the sacred to do something which the apostolic church did better without, it is possible that the religious garb and manner of life are a substitute for something which the apostolic church had and we lack.

What we see in the apostolic church is an abandonment of the ancient and accepted category of the sacred... the times, places, and personnel through which God is experienced more directly and immediately. We can find words in the New Testament to designate this direct and immediate experience. No one would question that the primary word is love; God is encountered in the loving communion of the members of the church with each other. This is not an experience, if I may be forgiven the expression, for which hierarchical directives are necessary... the indwelling Spirit is given to all believers in the sacraments of initiation and is manifest in the charismatic works which the Spirit empowers them to perform. These charismatic works are not the works exclusive of sacred personnel. As far as sacred places and times are concerned, God is equally available at any time and place. As far as sacred personnel are concerned, every believer becomes a member of the sacred personnel.

Editorial Team

Chris Diamond François Brassard
Arthur Menu Phil Little
Jim Noonan (NCR Regional Editor)
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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.

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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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See the back page for further details.

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 3-4 | Christmas Eve Baby In Honduras
<i>Phil Little</i> |
| 5-9 | Render To Caesar
<i>Dr. Michael Zarb</i> |
| 10 | The Early Meaning Of Church Unity
<i>Chris Diamond</i> |
| 10 | Prayer
<i>Tom McMahon</i> |
| 10-11 | Meister John Ekhart
<i>Charles Callanan</i> |
| 11-12 | Sr. Ilia Delio, O.S.F.
<i>Emil Kutarna</i> |
| 12 | Celebrating The Life Of Katherine Mary Stevenson |
| 13 | Return To Wonder
<i>Hank Mattimore</i> |
| 13-14 | Chincha Baja, Peru
<i>Joe Gubbels</i> |

Excerpt: Pope Francis by Massimo Faggioli in Catholic News Service

Pope Francis sees the church as having a role in society and indeed, "in everything humans go through," Faggioli said at the annual Anthony Jordan Lectures Series Feb. 28 at St. Joseph Seminary. "That is not a liberal thought; it's a radical Christian thought." The Anthony Jordan Lectures are put on by Newman Theological College with support from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Pope Francis sees himself as having two mandates for reform.

The first mandate he received from cardinals at the March 2013 conclave, which made him its surprise choice for pope. That mandate is to deal with problems of Vatican finances, corruption, sexual abuse and curial reform. There is consensus on the need to carry out that type of reform. From the very beginning, however, he made it clear that he had another mandate that arose out of his experience as archbishop of Buenos Aires. It includes dealing with new issues that have arisen since the Second Vatican Council, such as the role of women in the church, the family and marriage. "Who am I to judge?" Said Pope Francis.

It further includes his creation of the nine-member Council of Cardinals that meets every two months to help him govern the church. Pope Francis has changed some things. It is a kind of change that has produced a remarkable and disturbing series of reactions. Some bishops at Vatican II in 1963 wanted to create a council similar to the one Pope Francis launched, Faggioli said.

Faggioli also spoke of opposition to the pope in Europe that comes from "the non-Catholic intellectual economic establishment," including corporate and media leaders. These people see Pope Francis as a liberation theologian who challenges "a certain way of understanding the world through the point of view of the Western establishment". Faggioli predicted this Fall will be a key time for Pope Francis. His encyclical on the environment is due to be released in the summer, his September visit to the United States "will be the most delicate visit of the pontificate so far," and the world Synod of Bishops on the family will take place in October.

Christmas Eve Baby In Honduras

By Phil Little, Cedar, BC



Magna Marbella Rodríguez grew up in the city of El Progreso, about the size of Nanaimo with a population of about 100,000. Honduras, the original banana republic, is an extremely violent country and the second poorest in the western hemisphere. As a child Magna was abused. At the age of 18 she began living with her fiancé and

over the next 10 years gave birth to 5 children. In her relationship she was again victimized with physical and psychological abuse by her partner, something that is not uncommon in a country where 543 women were killed in domestic incidents in 2014.

In September 2013 Magna's world hit rock bottom. Only months after the birth of her youngest and fifth child, and then a subsequent pregnancy, Magna suffered a miscarriage in August. Her husband abandoned her and the children, leaving them with no form of support. In Honduras, a very patriarchal and macho society, there is no legal protection offered to women and children when men are violent or do not provide material support to the family. Magna, from clinical assessments afterwards, was quite possibly in a state of post-partum depression. Magna had very little work experience outside of the home and with five small children in the home, looking for work was impossible. Days passed with her children crying because of the hunger in their bellies. She tried to beg or borrow money from friends and relatives but received no support. On September 5, 2013 feeling totally inundated and unable to do anything for her children she thought of ending it all for herself and for them. Magna mixed a drink with insecticide and tried to give it to the children and herself. Neighbours heard the children crying, they intervened and called the police.

The children and Magna were taken to the hospital, but fortunately the amount of insecticide ingested was so diluted that there were no long term physical after effects. The children were taken into the custody of the State and Magna was taken to jail. A court ordered

psychiatric report was ordered and she was determined to be in a state of extreme confusion and depression.

The national press in Honduras latched onto the story and demonized Magna. This sensationalized story was a great distraction and took politics and the actions of the military off the front pages for a couple of days. The children were placed in an orphanage in El Progreso. Magna was sent to different prisons and in one was placed in a mixed area of men and women where she was prostituted and raped. She became pregnant again.

A Honduran Jesuit priest, Fr. Ismael Moreno (known as Padre Melo), who is the director of a human rights center known as E.R.I.C. (Teams for Reflection, Investigation and Communication) and also the director of an independent radio station, Radio Progreso, intuitively felt that there was more to the story than what was reported in the daily newspapers. He sent Dunia Pérez, a human rights worker, to the prison to investigate. In uncovering the tragic complexity of Magna's situation and providing legal support, Magna was released from jail in March 2014 under the protection of the Radio station. Magna has received subsequent medical attention and some psychiatric assessment. Her release had conditions placed upon her including limited supervised access to her children (2 hours in one visit per week). She is living in a shack in the garden of her brother's house with limited facilities available to her. Her own family is largely unsupportive, financially or emotionally.

The psychiatric report suggests that Magda was probably in some stage of post-partum depression after the birth of her youngest child which was made worse by the subsequent miscarriage and abandonment by her husband. In September 2015 Magna will have to return to court to face the charges against her. While she has a good defence, the Honduran legal system is a sham. Judges and the police are linked to organized crime and the drug cartels. Consequently the court system has a history of "throwing the book" at the simple cases usually involving the poor who cannot afford a proper defence.

Even if Magna is not condemned by the legal system she has huge barriers to moving forward. She is not illiterate but she is not "educated" and thus has few employment opportunities. The children are well cared for at the orphanage "Hogar Copprome" supported by a US group. One tragedy is that Magna perhaps will not be able to provide the same level of care for her children if they are ever returned to her. But it is natural that as a mother, Magna's desire is to be reunited with her children.

Dunia and Maria Pérez, a volunteer human rights lawyer from Spain, were providing daily care to Magna, helping her keep her

Christmas Eve Baby In Honduras Continued...

appointments and providing her with basic needs. Her health was precarious and in the final months of the pregnancy Magna was anemic and losing weight. On December 23 Magna began to experience some hemorrhaging and went to a local public hospital which turned her away. María had returned to Spain and Dunia was across the country dealing with a different case file. A woman journalist from Radio Progreso was contacted and the following morning she accompanied Magna back to the hospital and stayed with her during the day.

On the eve of Christmas Magna gave birth to a healthy 7 lb. baby girl, who has been named Briana Zoé: Briana which signifies “a

strong woman” and Zoé which represents

“life”. Magna has been

sustained with the

personal love and care provided by María and Dunia who have been

the guardian angels accompanying Magna and helping to provide

not only the basics to live, but also what for Magna has been most

important – the accompaniment by

dedicated women who helped guide her through this process in

taking control of her life. They did this as

friends, as “sisters”,

and as professionals. The future for Magna is far from certain. Her

goal is to get her children back but that may be a long term project.

Padre Melo continues to provide the financial support from donations he receives, and Dunia continues to provide the day to day

guidance that Magna needs to get control of her life. Little Briana Zoé is doing very well and putting on weight and getting medical

supervision.

This is not exactly the road to Bethlehem story ending at the Inn where there was no room for a very pregnant young woman from

Nazareth. If we read the infancy accounts in Matthew and Luke there are some comparisons. Magna was still a young woman

without a support system, and dealing with a pregnancy that was not

her choice. Perhaps there are thousands of women like her in Honduras, but Magna as an individual came to the attention of others because of the total tragedy of her life and the absence of real options. If she had just starved to death, along with her five children, very few would have known and fewer would have grieved for them.

On Christmas Eve, a little baby was born that gives Magna reason to again struggle for life, against the odds, but with the support of Padre Melo and his team. Some people who have learned of the situation of Magna has provided support to provide for her continued medical attention and the care of the baby. Dunia has developed a strategy that will hopefully see Magna assume greater independence,

showing she can care for herself and the baby. The other five children for the next long term period remain at the orphanage and can see their mother and baby sister once a week.

Does Briana Zoé bring a message of peace and joy? Not really. She is a little miracle, there is no doubt, protected inside her mother’s womb and surprisingly born healthy. Briana Zoé is a promise that needs what every child deserves and perhaps

more. As a girl born in Honduras she already has two strikes against her – being a woman and being poor. All babies are fragile, delicate and totally dependent. For Briana Zoé we can just add “most” to those aspects and include vulnerable and threatened.

For me, all the aspects of the Christmas celebration were conditioned by my interest and concern for Magna and her Christmas Eve baby. I would like to think the angels sang for the birth of Briana Zoé, and that Padre Melo’s team came bearing gifts like the Magi. We need to connect to the real Magna’s and Briana’s so that our Christmas celebrations truly enter into the mystery of what that original story is trying to tell us.



Render To Caesar

By Dr. Michael Zarb, Duncan, BC



The passage regarding the tribute to Caesar is found in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mk 12.13-17; Mt 22.15-22; Lk 20.20-26.) and also in the Gospel of Thomas (100). This famous saying is the only point at which Jesus says or does anything directly about Roman domination. Both ecclesial and scholarly interpretations have generally avoided,

even distorted, the full implications of this saying. It has been used as a justification of general obedience to one's rulers and at times used as an argument for the distinction between church and state as two separate spheres of religion and politics. This trend had started already with the Gospel writers who seem to have taken steps to soften its impact that might suggest that Jesus was dangerous to the imperial order. Justin Martyr, the second-century apologist, uses this saying, separated from the original context and conditions prevailing in the time of Jesus, in defence of the Christians' obedience and tranquility with regard to the Roman order (Apology 1.17). After Justin this type of application of the saying according to the interpreters' situations continued to the present day. However, it is not just possible but rather most probable that the original thrust of the saying was the opposite.

The setting

The saying is set within a dialogue. The interlocutors with Jesus are described slightly differently; Mark says, "They sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians." The "they" are not specified, possibly "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders" of 11.27 to whom Jesus told the Parable of the Vineyard are meant, the same authorities (Lk 20.1) to whom Luke also refers by his "they watched him and sent spies" (Lk 20.20). Matthew refers to them as the Pharisees and Herodians. This variation indicates that this ruse to trap Jesus was devised by the highest Jewish authorities including the different factions among them.

All three Gospels describe this mission as a trap "so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor." (Lk 20.20) Their question is purposely prefaced by flattery: "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance

with truth." (Mk 12.14) The question requires a yes or a no answer, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" (Mk 12.14b, 15) This question indicates that the payment or non-payment of the tribute was a serious issue of controversy in Judea. A 'no' answer would have been grounds for arrest; and so the questioners, perhaps from their knowledge of Jesus' stance on such matters, expected him to say explicitly that it was not lawful to pay the tribute.

The Denarius

Jesus, of course, detects their malice and asks them, "Why are you putting me to the test?" (Mk 12.15b) In Matthew he adds the aspersion, "you hypocrites." Then he requests to see the coin, "Bring me a denarius and let me see it." (Mk 12.16) This request to see the coin was intentional in order to introduce the image of the emperor into the argument. They brought him a denarius and he enquired about the image and the title, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." (Mk 12.16)

The denarius of Tiberius has the head of Tiberius on the obverse with a Latin inscription, TI[berius] CAESAR DIVI AVG [usti] F[ilius] AVGVSTVS, which translates, "Tiberius Caesar, the son of the divine Augustus, the Augustus." Octavian had been deified after his death by Tiberius who was his stepson. On the reverse of the coin there is a seated woman who holds a sceptre or upside down spear and a branch. The identity of this woman is generally assumed to be Livia, the wife of Augustus and mother of Tiberius representing the goddess Pax (Peace). The inscription is PONTIF[ex] MAXIM[us], that is "highest priest" of the gods of Rome. So, the images and inscriptions show clearly this is not a secular entity but a religious one. At the time of Jesus the imperial cult in Palestine was very alive and well. King Herod built three temples in Palestine dedicated to the goddess Roma and Augustus, one in Caesarea Maritima (in Judea, 22-12 B.C.E.), another in Sebaste (Samaria, 27-12 B.C.E.) and a third one in Pnias (Banyas, near Caesarea Philippi, after 20 B.C.E.). The claim that Jesus in his statement is distinguishing between secular state and religion is utter nonsense. It is not religion versus politics, church versus state, but religion versus religion. Rome was definitely a religious state not a secular state.

Jesus' saying

Then Jesus' answer to their question, "Render to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mk 12.17; Mt 22.21; Lk 20.25) The Gospel of Thomas (100) adds, "and what is mine give to me." Several recent interpreters recognize that in his ostensibly ambiguous response to the authorities' question, Jesus was asserting the absolute and exclusive sovereignty of God. The implications of the saying surface more clearly when it is placed in the context of the imperial situation of Jewish Palestine. The phrases, "the things of God" and "the things of Caesar" are considered in their full meaning as understood by Jesus' audience.

Opposition to the tribute

Render To Caesar Continued...

Jesus was not speaking to Christians but to Jews subjected to the domination of Rome. Jerusalem, as part of the Roman province of Judea, was subject to direct Roman tribute since 6 C.E. after the removal of Archelaus. The payment of the tribute was a very hot issue. There were two major incidents of resistance to the payment, one in 6 C.E. the other in 66 C.E. and let us not pretend that in between, during the ministry of Jesus, the issue had died out. These revolts illustrate both the attitude of the general public toward the tribute and the conflicting position of the ruling groups with that of the people. The first major resistance to the tribute was led by Judas of Galilee and the Pharisee Sadduk, the leaders of the Fourth Philosophy of Josephus (the other three being the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes) in reaction to the imposition of direct Roman rule in Judea. Their main tenet was that the lordship of God excluded that of Caesar or of any other human rulers and that acquiescence in the tribute was tantamount to acknowledging the lordship of Caesar. The opponent of this resistance movement was the high priest Joazar, who (says Josephus) was instrumental in persuading the Jews to submit to the assessment. There was serious popular opposition to Joazar, however, for he was eventually "overpowered by the multitude" (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1-26).

The second major protest against the tribute occurred in 66 C.E. when, in the late 50s and early 60s due to worsening conditions, the Judean people were in arrears in their payment of tribute. For the Roman authorities nonpayment of tribute was tantamount to rebellion. Despite the intervention of the Herodian king Agrippa II in exhorting the people to pay the tribute, the people, however, exasperated at continuing abuse by the Roman governor and at Agrippa himself, "heaped abuse on the king" and continued the rebellion (Josephus, *War* 2,17,1) which resulted in the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

From these two major events involving the issue of the tribute it appears that, during the decades around the ministry of Jesus, the payment of the tribute to Caesar was highly controversial: the Judean people, generally opposed and even resisted payment, while their ruling Temple aristocracy, being appointed by the Procurators in the name of Caesar, their own position depending on their cooperation with Rome, favoured and indeed collected the tribute. (Josephus, *War*, 2, 17,1) Moreover, the seriousness of the Jewish adamant opposition to the image of the emperor is clearly indicated by two incidents: first (c. 26/7 C.E.), Pilate's attempt to contravene this custom by placing standards with the bust of the emperor on them in Jerusalem was faced by such a fierce opposition that he felt compelled to "order the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Caesarea." (Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 3, 1). The second, (37 C.E.) was when Vitellius, the legate of Syria, in a campaign against Aretas, king of Nabataea, yielded to Jewish entreaties and ordered the troops carrying images of the emperor on their standards not to march through Judaeen territory (Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 5, 3).

The emperor was such a burning problem for many Jews that not only the image of the emperor was offensive to them but even the

name. At the end of his tenure Pilate tried to introduce votive shields without images but carrying the emperor's name. These he raised in Herod's former palace, now his own residence in Jerusalem. Meeting with no success when they approached Pilate, the people sent a petition to the emperor asking him to order the removal of the offending shields. Tiberius ordered Pilate to remove the shields from Jerusalem at once and to set them up in the temple of Augustus at Caesarea. (Philo, *Legatio* 38)

The "things of Caesar" and the "things of God"

In his response to the intended entrapment, as with his answers to the other questions in the controversies with the elite, Jesus did not give a direct answer to this one either but escalated the issue from that of the tribute to the higher issue of "the things of", the possessions and dues of, that is, lordship and he further changed the focus by introducing God into the bargain. The "things of Caesar" does not mean just the tribute coin and the "things of God" does not mean just the Temple tax; it is ludicrous to envisage Jesus selling the payment of tribute to Caesar and the Temple tax to God! This expression involves the possessions of and the worship due to both parties. The "things of Caesar" i.e. "the things pertaining or belonging to Caesar" imply all his possessions, all his demands and entitlements including the domination of Palestine, the imperial cult, that is his being a son of the god Augustus and highest priest of the Roman gods and his lordship over the people, to which none of the Jews would concede as legitimate in Palestine, except of course, for the priests and their party who were dependent on Rome. For the religious Jew, Caesar was not set up legitimately by God over Palestine - the occupation was not considered legitimized by God.

Quite a few commentators say Jesus meant that since the coin has the image of Caesar, it belongs to him so you give it back to him. This is simplistic reasoning: first, by this same logic, then, the Temple tax should be given to the god Melqart whose image is on the coin; second, those who had such a coin in their possession, unless they stole it, acquired it by doing or paying something to earn it. Therefore, it belonged to them no matter whose image is on it; my twenty dollar bills belong to me not to the queen whose image is on it. Caesar did not give it to them for free. Why should they give it to him; it is theirs. In fact, imposing a tax implies obtaining something that belongs to others not getting back what belongs to the taxpayer. On the other hand, the "things of God" i.e. "the things pertaining to God", his possessions and demands, to the Jews meant the whole world and especially the land and the people of Israel, and most importantly, the exclusive worship as the only God and only Lord. Jesus used this phrase in opposition to the "things of men" in his rebuke to Peter in Mark 8.33 (Mt 16.23), intimating two conflicting and irreconcilable concerns. So the issue in Jesus' statement "render to Caesar ..." is the lordship of God. The emphasis lies on the second part; it has the weight while the first part has its weight taken away from it. Since everything, the whole man, belongs to God, what belongs to God cannot be given to Caesar. The issue is not the tribute anymore but Caesar, his lack of lordship as against the absolute

Render To Caesar Continued...

lordship of God. If everything belongs to God as lord, then Caesar has no legitimate claims as lord. Jesus presented two scenarios to them: "Give back the things of Caesar to Caesar if you consider him your lord, and give back the things of God to God if you consider him your lord." -- Jesus threw the dilemma of the question poised to him back at them but with greater import, that is, "Is your lord Caesar or God?"

There are no two separate realms, Caesar's and God's, but only one realm: God's. For Jesus the whole creation is God's realm; God cares for all even the wicked (Lk 6.35); he cares even for the birds and flowers (Lk 12.24); the disciples are to pray to God for their daily bread (Lk 11.2) etc. In the Synoptic teaching of Jesus there is nothing that would justify the assumption that there is a temporal, secular or political sphere that possesses an autonomy of its own outside of God's creation. Thus for Jesus to be holding, in the tribute passage, that God has granted the Roman empire its own sphere of influence would mean that he was introducing an entirely new teaching that was at variance with his previous teaching.

Jesus' other teaching

This stance of Jesus can be supported by other teaching of his. The presence of the kingdom of God was the fundamental element of his message and actions. He understood the rule of God as direct, unmediated by the traditional human institutions. Regarding the rule of God Jesus says, "The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mk 12.29-31) Then the scribe dialoguing with him approves of Jesus' answer and adds that this commandment, "is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Jesus' approval of the scribe's answer indicates that for Jesus the Temple institution took second place to the rule of God. (Mk 12. 33f)

For Jesus there is only one Lord, "No servant can serve two masters. . . . You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Mt 6.24; Lk 16.13). One cannot serve God and Caesar. God's lordship is exclusive. Jesus does not compromise the lordship of God with regard to Caesar any more than he would with regard to the high-priestly aristocracy, Satan, or Mammon.

The reaction

Describing the reaction of the questioners Mark 12.17 has "And they marvelled at him"; Matthew adds, "and they left him and went away"; Luke adds "they became silent". This description of the reaction is, of course, the statement of the evangelists; it does not mean approval but rather shows the discomfiture of the interrogators as is the case with the other controversies with the elite. In Mark chapters 11-12 and parallels we have a series of face-offs, starting with the entry into Jerusalem; then Jesus challenges the high-priestly government directly and sharply in his Temple action. He tells a parable, the Vineyard, that the high priests recognize as pronouncing their own rejection and replacement by God. So in the controversy

over the tribute to Caesar there is no indication that Jesus' answer in any way defused the conflict by indicating that he agrees with them in accepting the lordship of Caesar.

One can imagine the reaction of other people in the audience, perhaps some chuckles or even hurrahs at the embarrassment of Jesus' opponents. Members of the audience understood that, in his wisdom, Jesus did not explicitly forbid payment which possibly could have caused his arrest right there and then, but he presented the theological rationale for its illegitimacy. His opponents seem to have understood it this way as well since this saying could have been the basis for the charge during the trial, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." (Lk 23.2) From the elites' perspective Jesus was "stirring up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." (Lk 23.5)

As noted above during the decades around the ministry of Jesus, the payment of the tribute to Caesar was highly controversial: the Jewish people opposed and even resisted payment, while their ruling aristocracy favoured it. This corresponds to the scenario in the Gospels: The elite, in favour of the tribute, proceed cautiously in challenging Jesus because they were afraid of an uproar among the people. The hearers, the people, on the other hand, would have understood each of the two halves of Jesus' double statement that, since Caesar really has no legitimate claims anyhow, nothing need be rendered. All belongs to God, the true Lord.

The half-shekel temple tax

Moreover, Jesus does not seem to have been fond of the Temple tax either. In Mt 17. 24-27 we have a story that, although it is set with a fairy-tale miracle, the main saying (vs. 25-26) of Jesus could be authentic. Matthew 17.24, "When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free."

On the analogy of the kings of the earth, Jesus, whose main teaching point is the kingdom of God, draws the conclusion that the people of Israel, the sons of God, are free from the payment of the Temple tax; they don't pay into the family. God is the Father not the oppressive despot exacting taxes on his own family already encumbered by burdensome taxes of the earthly kings like the Caesar's tribute. In the story Jesus adds, "However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself." (Mt 17.27) This saying about paying for not giving offence is too closely knit to the acquisition of the money through extraordinary means to be considered authentic. Did Jesus perform a miracle each year he needed to pay it? What about his consideration for the poor who could not easily get their shekels from fishes' mouths? This saying is aimed rather at

Render To Caesar Continued...

Matthew's audience probably including Jews who, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., were obliged to pay the Temple tax, then changed into the *Fiscus Judaicus* to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. This saying is not a report from the ministry of Jesus.

One may ask, why was the question put by the collectors? Was it because Jesus' orthodoxy and his attitude to the Temple were open to suspicion? The question itself implies a doubt. Jesus could have been suspect of being either indifferent or a conscientious objector. Not all Jews complied in paying this tax, some out of penury, some out of laxity and some were against it on principle. In the time of Jesus, the Temple priests exacted it every year from every male from the age of twenty. However, the Dead Sea sectarians interpreted Ex 38.26 (cf. also Ex 30.11-16), which does not specify the frequency, as payable only once in a lifetime, "[Concer]ning [the ransom] the money of valuation which one gives as ransom for his own person will be half [a shekel], only on[ce] will he give it in all his days." (4Q159 2.6-7) The priests even exempted themselves from the half-shekel tax. (Mishnah, *Sheqalim* 1.3-5)

A reason why certain people did not pay this tax could have been their objection to the image on the coin. For the Temple tax the authorities used the Syrian coin displaying the laureate head of the god Melqart / Heracles, a Tyrian deity on one side and a Ptolemaic eagle on the other. This apparently gave the priests no offence despite the commandment against images of deities. This currency was favoured probably because the silver content (92% and better) of this particular coin was the highest and most stable of the coins minted in the area at the time. Where money was concerned the Temple authorities put God on the back burner! Such a coin, which had been deliberately defaced, was found in Masada, - indicative of the objection to the image.

Further, could Melqart's image have also offended Jesus and, therefore, this was one of the reasons he tackled the money changers in his symbolic act at the Temple, apart from his concern for the poor who should not have to pay what they could not easily afford? His tackling of the tables of the dove vendors may also indicate Jesus' concern for the poor. The doves, the offering of the poor, like the other animals were overcharged; one could not bring one's own as they had to be blemish free and certified by the priests. Apparently the number of those who declined to pay was substantial. In the *Mekilta* there is a story about Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai lamenting about the catastrophe befalling Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. When he saw a girl picking out barley corns from the excrement of an Arab's horse, he blamed the dire situation on Israel's unwillingness to be subject to God by declining to pay the head tax to him.

Jesus and the tithes

There are other instances in the teaching of Jesus, that indicate his viewpoint with regard to donations to the elite of the religion, such as, the accusation of the scribes and Pharisees regarding their scrupulous tithing of the least herbs to parade their piety (cf. Lk

18.12) at the expense of the more important matters of the Torah. (Lk 11.42) This saying echoes the sentiment of Micah 6.8, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you [not donations cf. vs. 6-7] but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" That is, God does not really require the tithes but "justice and mercy and trust." (Mt 23.23) Another saying indicating Jesus' priorities involving giving to the religious institution is Mt 9.13, (cf. also 12.7) quoting Hosea 6.6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." That is, even the donations for sacrifice are not at the top of his list. For Jesus, donation to the institution was not the most important matter of the religion as apparently many seem to have held.

The widow's donation (Mk 12.41f; Lk 21.2f)

Mk 12.43 "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." Mark places this story at the close of a list of condemnations of the elite and the Temple priesthood exposing the outward ostentation and inner barrenness of their religion by contrasting with the widow's inner richness and outward penury. However, it is most unlikely that it is meant as commendation of the widow's giving to enrich the Temple treasury, by becoming entirely destitute; Jesus, rather, means it as a lament. Her giving away the last pittance of her resources to the Temple is not held up as a positive example. Certainly Jesus is not encouraging poor widows to give their whole income to the rich treasury! This saying rather helps to explain his opposition to the scribes and the Temple elite "who devour widows' houses" (Mk 12.40) by encouraging them to give to the Temple. The rulers of the Temple used their control to rob people of their livelihood; no wonder Jesus called the Temple "a den of brigands." (Mk 11.17)

Jesus and the chief priests

The Gospels describe the hostility between the Temple priests and Jesus very clearly. (Mk 11.18, Lk 19.47) Possibly the main cause was the Temple incident, no matter how minor the action of Jesus may have been, but from their point of view, it was dangerous and unacceptable. Jesus' action could not have been as violent as the evangelists make it, otherwise he would have been arrested on the spot unless he had an army with him. Neither the Temple police, nor the tax-collectors' musclemen, nor the Roman guard at the Antonia watching over the Temple area, would have permitted such a disruption of the Temple business with impunity. In this incident Jesus called the Temple elite a gang of brigands, so the priests and their allies sought to undermine his position with the people with a series of questions, namely, regarding his authority, (Mk 11.28) the legality of the tribute, (Mk 12.13-17) the resurrection issue (Mk 12.18-27) etc. and he, on his part, denounced them with the parable of the Vineyard. (Mk 12.1-12) No, Jesus surely was no fan of the Temple authority.

Taxes and tithes

Render To Caesar Continued...

In order to grasp Jesus' mindset regarding taxation and donations, one has to keep in mind the social and economic conditions of the time. At the top of the domination system was Roman control although differently in Galilee with Herod Antipas as vassal king of Rome from that in Judea with direct Roman rule by the procurators. There was also the domination of the Temple in Jerusalem holding both a religious and economic control. The high priesthood besides the religious functions was also primarily responsible for domestic political rule. Tithes, which were really taxes on agricultural production, were paid to the Temple and priesthood. Thus the people had a double system of taxation, that mandated by the Torah and that imposed by the Roman/Herodian rule. Both mostly impacted farmers who constituted the majority of Palestine's population.

Agriculture was tied to the Sabbatical cycle; in every seventh year the land was left fallow, the farmers getting no revenue. Every year there was the "wave offering" or "First fruits", 1- 3% of produce. Again every year, the first tithe of 10 percent given to the priests/ Levites. Then in the first, second, fourth, and fifth years of the cycle, a "second tithe," also of 10 percent. In the third and sixth years, the "poor man's tithe" of 10 percent given to the poor among whom the Levites were also included - These inventors of the Torah knew how to take care of themselves! These donations were for the priests and levites who kept them for themselves. A further tax, namely the half-shekel Temple tax, was levied for the support of the cultus at the Temple. The Torah burden has been calculated to amount to about 20% each year. In Galilee, in addition to the Torah imposed taxes, the people were burdened with the king's taxes. In Judea from 6 C.E. onwards, to the Torah system of taxation, the Romans added their own two direct taxes - 1) on agricultural produce, *tributum soli* - (12.5 %) paid partly in kind, partly in money; 2) a poll tax, *tributum capitis* - included a property tax (1% of value) according to a person's capital valuation as well as a poll-tax proper at a flat rate for all heads, *capita*, the tribute tax. The indirect taxes included taxes on certain foods, such as fruit, meat and salt, house taxes, city taxes and customs and tolls. Many of these could be exorbitant, especially customs and tolls; though certainty about the exact percentage is impossible, the figure of 25 percent has been cited. Moreover, the customs and tolls, since they were added each time a product crossed an administrative boundary, Judea having been divided into eleven toparchies, the price of an article, because of the cumulative effect, could be as much as a hundred times the price in its place of origin. The land tax apparently was 1% of the value of the land; the crop tax was about 12.5 % of the produce. The poll tax amounted to about one day's wages levied on everybody, including slaves, except children, that is, women from the age of twelve to sixty five, men from the age of fourteen to sixty five. Some have calculated that the combined taxation systems amounted to the intolerable proportion of between 40 and 50 percent or even more. This harsh taxation system hit, mostly, the lower class and the poor who constituted the largest part of the population and caused economic hardship and of course political resentment. That Roman taxation was oppressive may

be seen from the fact that the provinces of Syria and Judaea complained of it in 17 C.E.; Tacitus, however does not tell us anything about the outcome. (Tacitus, *Ann.* 2, 42).

The customs were collected by lessees, the so-called *publicani*, who leased the customs of a particular district for a fixed annual sum and these in turn leased to subordinate tax-gatherers. Whatever the revenue yielded in excess was their gain, but if the revenue fell short of the rental, they had to bear the loss. So in order not to suffer any losses, overcharging was the order of the day. No wonder publican and sinner were synonymous. The notoriety of the tax-collectors was denounced not only in the Gospels but in non-Jewish and Rabbinic literature as well.

In conclusion it is important to note that out of the wealth accrued through both systems of taxation the populace got nothing back. The magnificent palaces, towers and forts were built for the benefit of the aristocracy. There were no schools, hospitals nor other services provided for the general population. Thus, the principle of taxation in Jesus' time and that of today are not comparable. Today the people get services from the taxes they rightly pay; the people in that time got nothing back and yet certain commentators and preachers find it shocking to admit that Jesus could have disapproved of this gouging by the payment of taxes. They do not realize that Jesus perceived those taxes for what they were, namely, outright robbery by the aristocracy for their own benefit. Considering the hardship caused by these harsh taxes on the lower class and the poor, even a half decent human being would object to the payment of the tribute, a gift from those who could barely make ends meet in their necessities of life to the obscenely wealthy. I prefer to think of Jesus at least as a half decent human being!



Prayer

By Tom McMahon, San Jose, CA



Back in October of 2014 I seized upon an idea that there might be valuable history concerning religion and the presently showing Sunday night, **Masterpiece Theater**, called *Downton Abbey*. My search is based on my childhood faith that all human beings are good, this being the simple lesson I learned

when I accepted the *First Chapter of Genesis* wherein God created all life from nothing and God said this was good. **Yes, there was, as I grew up, the problem of human evil, crime, killing, wars and injustice yet, no matter what, every time an innocent baby was born I saw our Creator's goodness. I have spent a lifetime with the issues of human evil yet strongly hold onto that precious gift of faith willed to me by my widowed mother. God is good and life is good. Ours is the privilege of furthering the understanding of this simple statement which will occupy the human mind for centuries to come.**

Presently at our local **Senior Center** we are engaged in a complex search and study concerning human psychology and the historical events of the **English Tudor period**, its balanced economy, and its breakdown during and after **World War One** and the jaggedly woven human link that finds its way into our Western Culture in the 21st century. This is the underpinnings of the *Downton Abbey* TV series. Nowhere is formal religion featured, England in 2015 still seen as a godless country. I disagree as I sense there is substantial evidence of the up-stairs-down-stairs way of life coming from ancestral Tudor spiritual life style. I find the historical connections interesting in that for six years I have written weekly commentaries

for *Catholica* with a theme of "*the church/ecclesia/gathering of people in the age of technology*". As we pioneer jet-forward into what we think is new I ask is this what **Teilhard de Chardin** was telling us that even rocks have life and are sacred creation? Is humanly concerned behavior new? I am keeping an eye on the rear view mirror. I sense there is an interwoven abundance of positive human behaviors that are ancient and modern, creation being good from its beginnings. Outward appearances may change while core behavior patterns can be the same throughout centuries. **I encourage re-reading of Professor Len Swidler's series on Yeshua (*Jesus as feminist*) [LINK] and a comparison to the digital tracking of the explosive feminist movement in Western Culture as seen in the past twenty-four years. The respect for womanhood and love of life are core of both the nineteen hundred year old Jesus' story of *the woman at the well*, the Tudor period with all its evil, and the 2015 c.e. writings of such brilliant women as Sister Joan Chittister and other feminists. Our Creator hides in creation. TIME OUT, SLOW DOWN!**

I pause here with legitimate questions.

Has McMahon lost his marbles? Is he into a mishmash of words that don't fit the accustomed Roman Church speak of sin, hell, and punishment? Two new players have recently entered the world stage of healthy spirituality, namely a God who loves the human race and the master teacher of his Abba, our human brother Jesus. We are in a transition period and we need time and study to get used to these TWO as they "reappear". Vatican Two is the envelope by which these TWO arrive. Vatican Two is a carrier — a Church Council envelope that contains not one negative religious word, no excommunications, no sin or hell, but tells us we as church are, as Pope Francis puts it, a triage hospital of healing.

I hold that a Divine Power prayerfully hides in creation. My prayer is that of a mindful thanksgiving and praise; I dare not ask my Creator for a change of the divine mind and a creation plan so wonderfully laid out. Our job is to discern the divine plan. That is what ecclesia is about. This is the mindfulness way Jesus prayed. Pope Francis' actions are his genuine prayers.

Meister John Eckhart

By Charles Callan, St. John's, NL



A few years ago I began to realize that with the development of modern science, my familiar and traditional world of religious belief was being torn apart.

I grew up with one galaxy, which I believed to be the universe. I had

no desire to go beyond that. The idea of billions of galaxies each with billions of stars entirely changed my old concept of God

Since that time I have begun to focus on what is being called, "the new cosmology" I have come to take on new views of creation and I am now a firm believer in evolution (a forbidden topic in my youth). Now I see no contradiction between evolution and religious belief. That this concept was embraced in the middle ages by Meister Eckhart (a contemporary of Aquinas) was news to me.

No doubt the Dominican priest John Eckhart was a big influence on Teilhard de Chardin with his mystical views of God and the universe Both Eckhart and Teilhard were suppressed by the Church and

Meister John Eckhart Continued...

forbidden to publish during their lifetimes. Eckhart lived in the 13th and early 14th centuries and Teilhard died in 1955 in New York at the Jesuit America house.

Teilhard in turn influenced modern writers Thomas Berry, Brian Swimm, Matthew Fox and others.

Right now I am reading a book by Matthew Fox called, "Meister Eckhart, A Mystic Warrior for our Times". Through this book and through other readings I have come to understand the Good News as I have never come to understand it before. The Good News is really good. It boils down to one basic concept, "we are all saved and set free by the love of Jesus". Either we believe this or we do not. This is the whole point of all the world's religions.

In this book, Matthew Fox writes about the views of Eckhart and shows how they have expressed through the words of many writers, such as Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Carl Jung and others.

It seems now that there are two or more trends in theology, the traditional one we all learned as young men and seminarians and the "new Cosmology" trend. Naturally the main preoccupation of the Vatican is to hold the traditional line and to carefully monitor new

trends in thinking which might deviate from the ones officially taught by the Church.

For my part, this new thinking makes me happy and at peace. I am more conscious now of the life of God in every human being. It is an assurance of eternal life. I now understand that Jesus came to save everybody and that His mission among us is successful...100% successful. Our God is the Islamic God and the God of the Jews and the Hindus. He is the God of all aboriginal people.

If I were to be active in the priesthood today I would be compelled to share my ideas with others. I feel that my life as a proclaimer of the Word would be a short one.

One contemporary writer, Michael Morewood of Australia in his book, "Its time", claims that we need to restate all our basic dogmas in the light of what we now know about God, evolution and the universe.

I think that Pope Francis is calling us out of our traditional ghettos and asking us to do what Jesus came to ask us - Leave our comfort zones and do what we can to help our brothers and sisters here and now.

Sr. Ilia Delio, O.S.F.

By Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK



Sister Delio is Professor of Spirituality Studies at Washington Theological Union. In the Forward to her book *Christ In Evolution*, John Haught, S.J. writes: "This is indeed a very important book. . . especially in its

timely addressing of **three of the most important issues for faith and theology** in an age of science." (p. ix)

First, Delio provides a fresh evolutionary theology that remains completely faithful to science but without having to face the dead end of naturalism, which says that nature is all there is and the scientific method is the only reliable way to understand it, which suggests an atheistic conclusion about God.

Second, "Christian theology and spirituality have generally presented the figure of Christ in dimensions too diminutive to invite worship. . . Delio's work provides a much needed alternative to the

acosmic theology and spirituality that still shapes the religious life of countless Christians." (p. x)

Third, Delio's work prepares the ground for integrating "a scientific understanding of the universe with the idea of an infinite divine love and fidelity that can make sense only if God is at least personal." (p. x)

Delio herself writes, "My primary concern in this book is not with evolution or intelligent design and their "mechanisms" of action but with the person of Jesus Christ and the meaning of Christ for Christian life today". (p. 3). She mentions Teilhard de Chardin's notion that Christ is the inner meaning of the universe and its goal - the Omega Point. He writes that the whole evolutionary creation is a Divine Milieu, pregnant with God. (p. 5)

Considering the idea of the universe as creation, Delio follows the thinking of St. Bonaventure who did not consider foremost the incarnation as a remedy for sin but the primacy of love and the completion of creation. Christ does not save us from creation; rather Christ is the reason for creation.

Delio notes that Raimon Panikkar, a Catholic Hindu scholar, says that "Christ is not only the name of an historical personage, but a reality in our own lives." He uses the term *Christophany* to indicate that each person bears the mystery of Christ within. In a similar vein Delio notes that Thomas Merton's Christology builds on finding one's identity in God, since to find God is to find oneself, and to find oneself is to find Christ. (p. 11)

Jesus vs Christ

The acosmic theology and spirituality that shapes the religious life of countless Christians is based on the biblical account of creation

taken literally and gave rise to the notion of Original Sin and the need for a Redeemer which is Jesus Christ and the crucifixion.

In contrast, Ilia Delio writes:

“The evolutionary worldview, however, has opened up for us a whole new meaning of humanity, and, within humanity the emergence of Jesus Christ. John Haught has spoken of evolution as Darwin’s gift to theology, and I think we can say here that evolution is, in particular. Darwin’s gift to Christology. For the whole concept of evolution has liberated Christ from the limits of the man Jesus and enabled us to locate Christ in the heart of creation: the primacy of

God’s love, the exemplar of creation, the centrating principle of evolution, and the Omega point of an evolutionary universe. Rather than fixing our attention on a lonely, static figure of Jesus Christ, we can now locate Christ at the heart of the whole evolutionary process from cosmic evolution to biologic evolution to evolution of human consciousness and culture.” (p. 174)

Sister Delio believes that we are entering a Second Axial Age - a time that a new concept of creation and its meaning is dawning with the great scientific and theological thinkers of this age.

Celebrating The Life Of Katherine Mary Stevenson

Kae (as she preferred to be called) was born on the 17th April, 1920 in Charlottetown, PEI, one of nine children. The family were raised in an 800sq.ft. house “on the Prairie” in what is now the metropolis of Calgary, Alberta. Summertime provided a breather for the large family when they were able to camp outdoors. Her austere upbringing prepared her for the role of a PIONEER daughter, wife and mother. In an age when it was uncommon for women to work outside the home, Kae was a trailblazer in working to support the family and later to support her four children whom she raised single-handedly. She started work as a stenographer, became a secretary for the Canadian Pacific Railway legal department, and later as secretary to the Maitre d' of the Palliser Hotel in Calgary. From there she commenced a lengthy career with the City of Calgary in the Tax Department and became the first female tax clerk hired by the City. By the age of 59 she had taken University courses leading her to become a Tax Assessor.

Raised in a devout Catholic family, Kae challenged the Church and her Faith in areas of family life.

She insisted on sending her four children to the public school so that her children would not be segregated according to their gender. She worked hard to provide for her children as the sole breadwinner in the family and expected them to take care of themselves and their home. Some of her more notable sayings were: “Soap and water are cheap, there's no excuse for filth”. “Education is

a ticket out of poverty, go get it “. She was a firm disciplinarian with her children and expected them to focus on their studies. Kae loved Nature and raised her children to experience it and enjoy and cherish it.” “Nature is FREE. Enjoy it” was another of her classic sayings.

She would take them on hikes along the banks of the Bow River and name the flowers they encountered along the hiking trail. Camping out, tobogganing down the hills near their home, Youth Hostel trips, and gardening, which became her hobby and passion in her retirement. She was blessed with a green thumb and kept a wonderful garden in her Victoria home where she retired.

It was in Sidney where Kae had time to develop and develop her Faith, joining the Faith community of St. Elizabeth's and joining the traditional organizations, such as the Catholic Women's League, the Prayer Group, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

In 1996 a Sidney branch of Corpus Canada was organised. This group within the Church to assist Priests leaving active ministry and seeking marriage, together with the promotion of a proposal to allow married priests, both male and female, was a cause she enthusiastically espoused.

Kae was admitted to palliative care in Victoria and after a lengthy stay, returned to the Lord on the 8th of February 2015 as she approached her

95th birthday. May she rest in peace.



Return To Wonder

By Hank Mattimore, Santa Rosa, CA



Odd that we elders do not often share with youth the wonders of old age. We grouse about our bodily aches and limitations but the gifts of aging are as real as its losses. We do our kids and grandkids no favor when we conceal from them the quiet satisfactions of old age, the return to innocence that envelops our passing years, the sweet comfort of our memories and the return of our childhood capacity to wonder.

Among the many unheralded blessings of old age is our ability to return to the innocence of our childhood. We look upon the tiny hands of a new born baby and we are astonished. We are in awe at the flight of a raven gliding in majesty above. Our eyes come alive at the sight of a young woman jogger moving past us so effortlessly, her young legs strong; her motion so fluid.

The deepening shadows of a fall afternoon invite us to pause and enjoy the moment. Whether we touch the rough bark of an ancient redwood or smell the sweet scent of a honeysuckle or revel in the sound of a long forgotten song or the laughter of children at play, we find ourselves nourished, graced by the small wonders of life. If only for a moment, our heart is filled with wonder and thankfulness for the gift of life. "What did we do to deserve this?" we ask ourselves.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to make them aware of the gratitude we feel towards them and the warmth of our love. The next generation should know that old age is not all darkness and pain. They should know that, along with the challenges of aging, there is fulfillment and hope and yes a return to wonder.

If we but make the effort we find that the gifts of our senior years are many; forgiveness, tolerance, gratitude are all our companions as we near the finish line. Hopefully, we become less hardened in our judgments, more accepting of our failings, more humble and above all, grateful for the gift of our years and the God who lives within us all.

Chincha Baja, Peru

By Joe Gubbels, Chincha Baja, Peru

Here are a few photos to illustrate what has been going on with me and the projects in Chincha Baja, Peru. You will see in a couple of photos my granddaughter, Zoey, who is now 16 months old; official Ministry of Education signs and colours for all public education institutes; textile students and proud first prize recipients of the regional competition; 2014 graduates; Christmas party for special people; preparation of PaneTonys (Peruvian Christmas Bread) in our Industrial Foods workshop; Santa's Hot Chocolate with PaneTonys at Puesuelos Norte; instructing how to construct ecological wood burning stoves at La Calera; constructing roof tops over bedrooms in Cajito; and illustrious visitors to Chincha Baja.



Grandpa Joe with Toby and Chewy



Zoey with her adopted brothers

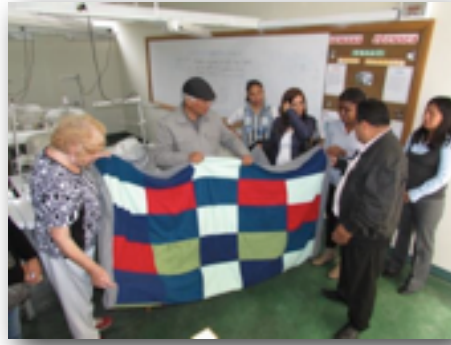


Courtney and Zoey

Chincha Baja, Peru Continued...



Christmas Party For Special People



First Prize In Regional Competition



Textile Students



My Dear Granddaughter, Zoey



Rotary Sherwook Park Scholarship



PaneTonys (Peruvian Christmas Bread)



PaneTonys (Peruvian Christmas Bread)



PaneTonys (Peruvian Christmas Bread)



PaneTonys (Peruvian Christmas Bread)



2014 Graduates

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 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

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