



# The Journal



October - December 2016

## Christmas - An Open Or Even A Half-Door

By Seamus Ahearne, Dublin, Ireland



Sophie and Zara had a very serious chat this time last year. These are my grandnieces. They aren't my grandchildren as one very brazen old lady (she was 70!) suggested recently! Sophie and Zara had a problem. Their brother Kyle was sad. His grandfather had died. Sophie explained to Zara that John had gone to heaven. But Zara wanted to know- where is heaven? Sophie was 5. She explained where heaven was. And then Zara asked – can we go there?

The story of the children is our story too. Where is heaven? Where is God? What is Christmas? The feast of Light. Who is the light? Jesus Christ. We had a swinging door last year as our symbol (suggested by Francis). Who opens the DOOR to God; to wonder; to beauty; to mystery? How can we open that DOOR into the heart of God? Into the poetry of faith?

At John's funeral (& all funerals), at the foot of the Comeraghs – the door also swung open. The mountains spoke. Nature is a door to God. If we let it swing open. If we stop, stare and are awed. The sense of loss at John's funeral – that too is a door into humanity and goodness. The wandering into many doors of homes (families), and stories. The openness, goodness and wonder of a home and family is that Open door. I am reminded of the half-door at home in years gone by; the Table and the Range. The Kettle of hospitality was always boiling. Food was for sharing. Chat was for nourishment. That was the altar. Here was the Eucharist of life.

The Open door – of laughter and argument; the Open door of insight and inspiration; the Open door of friendship and love. The Open door to God, happens in such hospitality. The Open Door – is a touch of God. It gives us a glimpse of

something beyond. We shudder with surprise, delight and humility.

And now I return to the little ones: Sophie and Zara. 'Can we go there?' All of us can go there -To heaven and heaven is very close. It is when we let the fresh air of God into our minds, hearts and imaginations and don't stop learning, listening and loitering. Dark minds, dull hearts, dreary imaginations make no room for open doors. An Open door – happens when we let a baby, (the helplessness and mystery of a baby), tell us, how God relies on us and needs us. (Christmas).

I think of Medellin; a City described as 'soaring into the heavens.' That City links our minds, with the recent crash of the Chapencoense team. A City which connects with a Meeting of Latin American Bishops in '68 where the 'option for the poor' was declared and where 'liberation theology' woke up. If those links are suggestive and if we can 'soar into the heavens' we may catch something of the 'City of God' of which St Augustine speaks. Where is that City of God, for us just now?

But where does the codology of Brexit fit into this? Or Trump (named as person of the year)? Or the limiting counterfeit view of God sometimes peddled by Church people? These are crass, crude and reduced versions of humanity where the soaring sense of Godliness is lost and where the half-door is shut and where little fearful minds take over. There is no poetry in Brexit or in Trump or in some Church propagandists. There is nothing that 'soars into the sky.' There is only the flatness of closed minds, closed doors and closed imaginations. And I wonder how infected we all are, by our neglect of a God, who throws open doors, and who explodes in our hearts, with enthusiasm, exuberance and excitement. It is the Feast of Good News. It is the Feast of Wonder. It is the Feast of God's Foolishness. It is the Feast of Beauty. It is the Feast of Poetry. It is the Feast of God inside us. It is the Feast of Love. It is the Feast of the Open Door or the Half Door. It is expansive, extraordinary & wonderful.

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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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## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1            Christmas - An Open Or Even A Half-Door  
*Seamus Ahearne*
- 3            A New Perspective  
*Arthur Menu*
- 4            Fools Rush In Where Angels Fear To Tread  
*Emil Kutarna*
- 5-7        Going It Alone  
*Phil Little*
- 8-9        Book Review: Mel Gibson - The Passion  
*Dan Driscoll*
- 9            Life Is A Song  
*Hank Mattimore*
- 10          All I Have Now, Unknowing!, & Horizon  
*John Chuchman*
- 11          Pope Francis Meets With Former Priests & Families  
*Michael Duggan*
- 11          Excerpted From St. Brigid's Newsletter  
*Monica Kilburn-Smith*

I am editing a biography of a dear friend of mine in the UK with whom I was in College in Sussex... he went on to be ordained; I left and became a teacher. However, after many difficult experiences with Parish Priests, the hierarchy, and depression, he left the ministry; he is now happily married with a growing "family tree" and he still writes liturgical books for the Diocese of Norfolk.

We have kept in touch over the years and I was chatting to him about the wonderful books coming from Fr. Richard Rohr FM. He knew of him indirectly but wanted to know more... so, I suggested that he purchase *The Immortal Diamond*.

This he did but his reply to me about the content was not what I expected.

He said that this was a remarkable book and was going to reread it for a second time because "he thought that for all the years as a priest he had been a fraud."

I immediately had to reply to him as I was quite upset at his reaction to assure him that in no way was he a fraud [actually in many activities he was ahead of his time!] He is now recommending Rohr's books to others in his circle which is similar to *CorpusCanada*.

I hope that I can continue to read *The Journal*.

Peter Elliott, Duncan, BC

# A New Perspective

by Arthur Menu, Sidney, BC

“It’s time”. You know the feeling. You knew you would have to make a decision. You didn’t know when, but you knew that when the time came, you would know. Those of our readers who have retired will recognize the feeling. You knew you would have to retire but you didn’t know when. And then you knew. “It’s time.”

That happened for me a few weeks ago. I have been working for the Vancouver Island Health Authority for 18 years. I turn 67 in two weeks. It’s time. I could retire tomorrow and it would feel right. However, the program in which I work will be undergoing some significant staff changes in the first half of 2017, and I feel I should stick around to help with that before I go, so I have told my employer that my last day of work will be 31 October 2017.

With this decision I have begun to reflect on my working life. I was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1980. I liked my work. I liked being a priest. I liked the way people respected me and appreciated me. At the same time I knew I was an incomplete person, that there were parts of me that had never developed, and that my attempts to develop those parts of myself would conflict with the role the Church had defined for priests.

I fell in love. Lots of priests do. Each one handles it in his own way. Many continue on as priests. Many choose to marry. I had enough sense to know that being in love is not a sufficient reason to marry. As a Jesuit I had learned a method for discerning God’s will for me. It involved prayer and the guidance of a spiritual director. I was blessed to have the late Father John Veltri, S.J. as my spiritual director. I took a leave of absence from the Jesuits and after a year of prayerful discernment and deepening my relationship with Alanna, I asked her to marry me. I did so believing that this is what God wanted for both of us. Alanna did too.

When we got married in 1989 I thought that the Church would abolish the requirement of mandatory celibacy for non-religious order priests within 15 years. How wrong I was! 27 years have passed with no change. I still think mandatory celibacy will be abolished but I don’t have a time frame.

For most of the time since I married I have felt that I would have had a more fulfilled life if I had been able to continue working as a Catholic priest and also be married, although I have never doubted

that I made the right choice in marrying Alanna. Lately I have begun to think differently.

When I look back on all that God has blessed me with in the years Alanna and I have been married, I feel that I have done more to fulfil my priestly vocation than I would have done if the Church had allowed me to continue working as a priest and a married man. Over the years I have served as a supply minister for three United Church of Canada congregations, a spiritual director, a hospital chaplain, and clinical leader for the Vancouver Island Health Authority’s Spiritual Health program. I have been an active member of my local Catholic parish and a local United Church congregation. I have been active in Corpus Canada and a founder of Xristos Community Society, which publishes *The Journal*. In all these ways I have provided spiritual care and facilitated the provision of spiritual care to many people. It has

been an immensely rich experience.

But what I am most proud of, and grateful for, is supporting my wife, Alanna, to become a minister in the United Church. I have seen her grow as a leader for her congregation. I have seen how the congregation has been blessed through her ministry. I have seen her become a more confident, more assured, more fully alive human being. She has been a role model for me in her ability to forgive, to risk unpopularity in a good cause, and to laugh at



herself. I could not have asked for a better partner.

Yes, there are times when I attend Mass when I think I could do a better job than the man at the front. But I wouldn’t trade places with him. There isn’t a place for me as a priest in the Church today. I could not preach all that I believe to be true. I would find it difficult to celebrate Mass using the changed liturgical language that was introduced in 2010. They took the plain-Jane English that had been in use since 1970 and made it harder to understand and infused it with a pre-Vatican II spirit. The new English version is the most visible symbol of the turning away from Vatican Council II that took place under the pontificates at John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Another generation will have to fight the battles that we did not win. They will succeed and some of us, possibly I among them, will applaud from heaven. What retirement holds for me, I do not know. One thing I do know. It’s time.

# Fools Rush In Where Angels Fear To Tread

by *Emil Kutarna, Regina, SK*

There is an old saying, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread”. Maybe I’m a fool for daring to look at Christmas from a different angle than what I preached sixty years ago, that Jesus was the Son of God become man, the doctrine of the incarnation.

Let me quote Matthew Fox: “Today’s spirituality desperately needs a totally human Jesus. This business of understanding Jesus being divine along with immaculate conception, assumption, and Mary’s bodily incorruptness is myth thinking beyond human comprehension. Present day religion has a need to understand old time mythology.”

And further he writes: “A Catholic universalism will demand many changes in the formulation of doctrine, but the first and most basic is the acknowledgement that the “Incarnation” is a metaphor.”

- Matthew Fox and Incarnation Spirituality Oct. 6, 2016

This sounds like it sweeps away all the beautiful images of Christmas. What about the crib in church that the little kids saw and wonder at? What about all the traditional carols, Silent Night, Adeste Fideles, Joy to The World, etc.? The Christmas tree all lit up, yes, and even Santa, Saint Nicholas, do we just throw them out the window?

Of course not! Not anymore than you would tell a small child that there is no Santa Clause. I see nothing wrong in letting children enjoy the fantasy of Santa in the North Pole and the reindeer. But when we grew up we figured it out that dad was the real Santa.

Similarly, we need to grow up spiritually. Sadly, many good people don’t grow in knowledge beyond their First Communion catechism.

Also, sadly, that wasn’t enough to “grow up” spiritually into adulthood. And it shows in the waning practice of any religion. An adult continues to search because there are new discoveries and new understanding of the faith.

Pope Francis says: “Christian doctrine is not a closed system, incapable of raising questions, doubts, inquiries, but is living, is able to unsettle, is able to enliven. It has a face that is supple, a body that moves and develops, flesh that is tender: Christian doctrine is called Jesus Christ. . . .

One could say that today we are not living an epoch of change so much as an epochal change.

- Visit to Florence, Nov. 10, 2015

Joe Weber: We have been subtly coerced over hundreds of years to not think. We have given away our rights to think, dream, ask questions, or voice our doubts about teachings we have been fed’,

while allowing others to make decisions for us. Giving away our basic human rights gives total permission to others to feed us whatever chaff they wish sell us as “gospel” on the premise that to be one of their chosen, we have to feed upon and digest their “word” as the only way to grow spiritually or yet especially to “be saved”.

Our “sacred human devised rituals and liturgies” have us continually groveling as bastard, unlovable children before a judgmental deity begging for forgiveness and mercy of the deity. How can joy be found in that image? Where is the Presence of Love generative while we are continually denigrated in the words used in liturgy?

Today the remnant followers of our teacher from Nazareth, Yeshua bar Yosef, need to envision a new paradigm about God/Divine Presence and Life. Not rehashed theology based on worldviews from thousands of years ago. But

instead, to embrace the allurements of the Spirit that continually leads us forward to future Human/Spiritual growth. We need to embrace the reality that the Divine is in our very DNA, and has resided intimately within us from the very moment we came into being. And most wondrously the Divine gives us the freedom to grow to full human potential, to make our own choices. We also need to re-explore the teachings of Yeshua, not just reviewing everything about him through the myopic lens offered by Christianity, or even Roman Catholicism. Instead, place his teaching parallel with teachings from other mystics of wisdom, other faith experiences, to glean

new insights about the living reality of the Divine in Creation.

- (Catholica Nov. 11, 2016).

Conclusion for meditation: Celebrate Christmas, the Incarnation with an adult vision. Incarnation means more than the birth of one man, Jesus. Incarnation means that the divine is indwelling within you and me, your wife and your children, yes and in all creation, A new celebration of the incarnation could also include spending some time in meditation on the wonder of God’s presence so intimate to ourselves and to nature, the snow-covered trees, giving shelter to our little flying brothers, and God is there too. Why? For only one reason, God can’t help but want to be intimate with all of God’s creation. And God who filled the humanity of Jesus and St. Francis with so much joy offers the same to you as a gift, a Christmas gift. Accept with wonder, love and faith and give thanks



# Going It Alone

by Phil Little, Cedar, BC

El Progreso, Departamento de Yoro, Honduras

**Tuesday, December 6, 2016**

I am somewhere over the US, about an hour north of Houston And 3 hours to go before Vancouver. My five weeks in Honduras have come to an end; I am relieved to be returning home even though I have seen the photos of the snow that has covered Vancouver Island, perhaps more snow than we had all last winter. Leaving Melo is never easy, although I feel he is somewhat safe as he will be surrounded by many people including foreigners for the next few weeks.

The big push right now is in the preparations for the 60th anniversary of Radio Progreso. That it has survived this long is in religious terms something of a miracle, and it has only been shut down twice by the military, the last time after the military coup in 2009. There are 9 people coming from Norway, including representatives of the RAFTO foundation. As well the Norwegian ambassador will also be coming to El Progreso. A good friend of Melo's has come from Spain for a month. Javier Garcia was a Jesuit seminarian from Spain who requested to do some of his formation in Central America. The Jesuits have a long 12 year formation process which includes a 2 year field experience. Javier was with Melo in Mexico and in Honduras more than 25 years ago. Javier in the process decided not to continue, he returned to Spain but had made one previous trip to Honduras to visit with Melo and his family.

## ***Caravan for Sovereignty***

A week of activities will conclude on Dec 17 with a great celebration with a number of events, including an evening of music with international artists who will come just for this celebration. You might remember early in my trip I experienced the first Caravan for Sovereignty when cars and trucks from the south and north headed to Siguatepeque to challenge the road toll booth erected by COVI, an Ecuatorian company. That challenge had a somewhat mixed result. The police and military put on a show of force, somewhat overdone, the protestors were blocked a short distance before the toll booth and the highway was closed for 3 to 4 hours. Then COVI asked for a dialogue and then didn't show up for the meeting.

There is one toll booth at San Manuel, about half way between El Progreso and San Pedro Sula, owned by a different foreign transnational, where the public has largely defied the toll and got away with it. People drive past the toll booth with their windows up, and stop just in front of the bar that blocks the path. After a 10 second

wait, the bar is raised and people drive on happy and energized at this act of public defiance. This past week the government threatened to crack down and put on a show of force with police, but people continued to refuse to pay. The company increased the wait time which only resulted in long highway delays and eventually the company relented. (When driving alone I had mixed feelings about being a foreigner and challenging the toll booth, but I rationalized my position as driving Melo's car and that it was really the car's decision. I found the experience to be somewhat unreal, but it gave me a feeling of insecurity which is what Hondurans must also feel each time they challenge the toll booths.)

Saturday Dec 10 is Human Rights day, and there is organized a second and larger challenge to the toll booth of COVI at Siguatepeque. This event is the first official event of the week of celebrations for the radio station. People are both excited and at the same time worried, because the response of the police and military cannot be anticipated.

You might remember the situation of Sandra Sanchez and Karla Lara who after the first caravan were stopped at another toll booth close to Tegucigalpa. They were detained by the police for being "naughty" and held for a few hours at a police station in a rather dangerous neighbourhood. I was in Tegucigalpa with Melo when he accompanied Sandra Sanchez to file a formal complaint about the illegal detention and arrest of Sandra and Karla. As well we visited the United Nations office on human rights and the representatives who met us were

very concerned about this case. Since then the UN has expanded its representation of Human Rights officers in Honduras, something the government surely does not like. After a number of interventions by the UN people asking the government to clarify its position with regard to the illegal detention of Sandra and Karla, the government's own human rights office (not known to be pro-active or active at all) ordered the arrest of the police officer who had detained Sandra and Karla. That is surely going to make the police feel uncomfortable as they are rented out to a foreign transnational and then get slammed for doing what the government orders. The UN Human Rights officers will be present on Saturday at the toll booth in Siguatepeque to observe the events of the Caravan and the police response.

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## Going It Alone Continued...

Melo was invited to a special Human Rights conference in Panama last Thursday and Friday. As well the Honduran government sent its own human rights representatives to the conference. Apparently the government people did not appreciate Melo's interventions. Melo's flight home was cancelled and rescheduled for early the next morning. I was able to sleep in until 5 am and then Javier and I went to the airport in San Pedro Sula to meet Melo. He arrived home with a severe cold and could barely speak. Untypical for Melo he went home to go to bed, as he had to get up at 3 am to get to the airport in Panama.

I had intended to buy some coffee which is sold at the radio station. Melo has friends in the mountains who produce excellent coffee and he buys it and sells it so that his friends can have a market without intermediaries who are taking advantage of the farmer who does all the work. However I did not act in time and the radio had run out of coffee. Melo wanted to have coffee available during the celebrations so he arranged for a Saturday morning pick up.

At the request of the farmer we were to meet him in Peña Blanca, a small town 90 minutes from El Progreso in the Sta. Barbara mountains. We were asked to wait at the gasoline station which we did.

However the farmer came down with a truck and a good group of his family, and decided to enjoy some chicken at a small restaurant. They drove past us and then wondered why we did not meet them. Eventually they phoned Melo and woke him up and got my phone number and asked us to drive a few blocks up the street to the restaurant. There was no explanation or apology as to why they changed their plans and left us waiting for 1 1/2 hours at the only gasoline station in town. They were happy to see us and sorry we didn't have more time to visit with them, like we were standing for 1 1/2 hours only a short distance off the highway, but anyways it was just another illustration of the Latin approach to time schedules. I could only think that any profit from selling 100 lbs. of his coffee was going into buy a chicken dinner for 7 members of the family. My frustration was somewhat eased as I was allowed to hold the newborn baby girl, only 2 months old. I was with one of the drivers from the radio station, and we made it back to El Progreso at noon instead of 10 am.

On Monday I was able to purchase 10 lbs. of coffee, not as much as last time, so I have my coffee and there is plenty left for the celebrations this coming week at the radio station.

Sunday Melo was still sick and trying to hide out in his house, but somehow people figured out where he was and came to the house to speak with him. Melo is far too generous and even though he could barely speak, he allowed people to come and bring their concerns.

Sunday evening he has the mass at a church called Sta. Teresita (for the "Little Flower" - a Catholic thing of no great consequence). He couldn't beg off as he had been told that some baptisms had been arranged. Yet still he could barely speak so he asked me to deliver the sermon, which was fairly easy as I tried to connect the themes of Advent, the baptisms and the reading about John the Baptist. Of course the church was half full of people who otherwise never come

by, and their thoughts were about taking photos at the end, so I kept it fairly light and welcoming. Before the mass I went over and met the parents and the babies - including one set of beautiful little identical twins.

When we got home I suggested that he could sleep an extra hour or so if he allowed me to do the radio program in the morning. He asked me if I was sure, and I told him that I would try to follow the format established. He was happy to accept.

So I got up a bit later than usual for a week day, and still made it to the radio station at 4:45 to prepare some thoughts for the morning. The person on duty was a young fellow, Isaac, and I asked him to help with the names of people who phoned in as I find it very difficult to understand people whose voices are not all that clear. I think I did fairly well for a first solo and it turned out that Melo awoke by force of habit and listened to the program.

I offered a second time Monday evening and this morning I was up again at 3:50 and had my last cold shower hopefully for a long time, and then made it to the radio station. Being Dec 6 I thought about doing something on St. Nicolas and the eventual morphing into Santa Claus. I am surprised to see so much of Santa Claus and Frosty the Snowman decorations in the stores and in homes. Then I returned to the house to finish packing my suitcase and to have my final breakfast with Melo, Javier and Fr. John.

I must admit that I was slighted by the local constabulary this morning. They parked outside of my bedroom and when I started to move the car they pulled away and parked a short distance up the street. I took the car outside of the gate and then of course I had to get out of the car to close the gate. When they realized it was me alone,



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## Going It Alone Continued...

they turned off their lights and decided not to follow me to the radio station. Should I complain??

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Now what? I am satisfied with this trip. Melo was appreciative of my support and the times when I was actually useful as sacristan, driver, parking supervisor, fill-in radio announcer, and friend. We actually spent very little time talking, as when he is on the go Melo is always in some conference mode, solving someone's problems, literally saving lives (in ways I cannot write about), or catching up on some of his writing for different journals and for the radio stations commentaries. I had the opportunity to visit with Melo's mother a number of times, especially when Melo was away, as I know it bothers him when he is not able to drop in for a regular visit. Through Melo I have shared in some of his special friendships, and in this way I have been enriched by the depth of their commitment and warmth.

I do feel somewhat pained in leaving Jennifer and Josue and of course baby Sol. They have come into my life and have brought me great joy and love. Little Sol is only a bit more than 2 1/2 but she is talking and relating. She calls me "Panino Felipe", she hasn't quite got the "d" in "padrino" but he excitement and acceptance is genuine. They have forced me to expand my heart and to make room for more.



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On Saturday evening I wanted to thank a small group from the radio and some others who have been most kind to me. After returning from the coffee venture, I took over the kitchen to prepare a special Peruvian meal. The kitchen is somewhat basic. Few pots and pans have handles and other utensils exist in rather worn out or broken forms. Not wanting to take a chance I went to the superstore and bought what I thought I needed including plastic plates and utensils. I know that this is totally un-environmental, but there were simply not enough plates and utensils for 15 people. As it turned out some couldn't come and others who had not been invited came along with family or friends, which was quite OK as I had made plenty.

For dessert I had made my mother's special trifle, which I knew would be something totally different for most people. I substituted flan for the custard, as basically the flan is a type of custard. The whipping cream was a challenge. I found a 1 litre box of "sweet

cream" with an expiry date of April 2017, not something that gave me a lot of confidence. The milk sold in these tetrapaks is not refrigerated. When I tried to pour out the sweet cream it didn't flow. I cut off the top and found that the cream had solidified, with thin milk at the bottom. Still, I guessed this is how it must be in Honduras, and no one had ever experienced this whipped cream phenomenon in the home before, so with the electric beaters that actually worked, the solids and the milk eventually blended and then began to turn into fluffy whipped cream. I made two bowls and it quickly disappeared to everyone's delight. So my mother contributed to this great cross-cultural experience with an English trifle in Honduras.

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Occasionally an article might appear about Honduras. I hope I have peaked the interest of a few who might take to writing a letter to the Canadian government asking what we are doing to support human

rights in Honduras. Of course the answer is nothing, as the Canadian government is supporting financially not only the dictatorship but also Canadian misadventures in tourism, mining and the sweatshops. But it is important that the Canadian government begin to realize that people are starting to ask for more answers. Elizabeth May pushed for an explanation about the Canadian government's response to the assassination of Berta Caceres, and did receive a response suggesting that the Canadian government is very concerned about human rights. Like the Trudeau government is

showing that it has as little concern about indigenous rights in Canada as the previous government, and its concerns about the Lenca and Garifuna communities cannot be taken seriously. But letter writing does influence the government.

So with that this blog will close until another trip, if all goes well and that is allowed to happen. Melo's enemies, in government, international business and indeed in the Catholic Church, are many. He is not identified with any political party which makes it more difficult to dismiss him. He does have the twice daily presence of police at his home, but their presence is not clearly seen as protection. There are so many rogue actors in the government and the military that Melo is constantly in danger. Berta Caceres was supposed to have protection but she was killed by a murder squad that included two high ranking military officers (who are still in jail and have not been silenced themselves), and there are links directly to the office of the dictator president. I do fear for Melo.

# Book Review: Mel Gibson - The Passion

by Dan Driscoll, Halifax, NS

I must admit to ignorance in respect to Catherine Emmerich, though the name does 'ring a bell'. I 'googled' upon return home; the Wiki page gives credible capsule biography of 'Anne Catherine', but records that much of what was written about her was authored by her admirer/secretary. My spin on the Mel Gibson production is not affected by what is known or not known about Catherine Emmerich.

Several film critics have felt that Gibson focused too much on 'blood & gore' aspects of events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. I incline to agree with those critics, but not for quite the same reasons as might at first be supposed. One critic went so far as to credit audience statistics for viewing *The Passion* as symptomatic of 'blood & gore voyeurism' --- a rather extreme judgment, likening it to morbid curiosity --- a la 'the peeping Tom'.

In my lexicon, this simply raises another question: wherefore, then, might come this kind of unconscious

motivation? This leads us to what Jungian psychologists pose as 'the Jungian Shadow', that part of our consciousness that we keep out of focus for fear that if we actually allow ourselves to 'face up to it' we will 'lose confidence in ourselves'. But we cannot deny the obvious fact that very young children are 'fascinated' by 'monsters'---wild animals that by nature are threatening to humans---bears, lions, tigers, etc. This may in part clarify the scriptural passage, ". . .and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:16).

Those who aspire to 'doing pastoral work' are not always well served by 'conventional wisdom'---the highly academic philosophers, psychologists and medical specialists. Pere Teilhard made the point (largely ignored and only now being addressed by academics) that 'modern man should NOT be studied in the same way that science has studied the 'biosphere'---the plant and animal kingdoms. Those who carefully study Teilhard conclude that his intellectual achievement has been to 'reconcile Science and Religion', and in doing so has 'inverted the sandglass'/stood the conventional theological assumption on its head'.

And indeed this is an example of it: "For behold, I saw the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven like a bride adorned for her husband". Instead of 'putting man under the microscope and devising any number of mechanical and electronic 'scanners' to 'map' every square millimetre of his anatomy, those of us who aspire to emulate the 'saviour'---"come to me all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will bring rest for your souls", must begin to study

man by an inward process of memory, which can go beyond the merely individual and personal and extend to the wider regions of the family, ethnic, and 'racial'. Our 'detractors will accuse us of being 'ivory tower', and we must be prepared for that---"Blessed are you when they speak all manner of things against you".

So, back to my 'conjecture' concerning what might possibly be the real source of our preoccupation with 'blood and gore'. Of course it might NOT be; there is always the chance that our best guesses could amount to being 'false prophecy'; that is the chance one has to take, if one is to 'speak out' on what one feels to be 'the truth'.

Science is now beginning to reveal to us the notion that 'memory is stored in the genes'. We used to think that it was 'in the brain', but in those days only the top-drawer biologist knew that genes exist---and only a fraction of what their real 'function' was. Pere Teilhard insisted that the 'gene and chromosome' assembly is part and parcel of our

intellectual/psychic/spiritual anatomy, the importance of which is only now 'being revealed to us' through contemporary scientific and historical study. The medical people seek to 'ease the pain' of contemporary anxiety and depression by 'antidotes' and 'inhibitors', while the 'pastoral counsellor' puts more emphasis on 'seeing' its root cause and recognizing the function of suffering as the 'narrow way, leading to the Kingdom'. Both of the alternatives have their place; one suffering acute physical pain will need 'pain relief', but the 'inner disquiet' can only be dealt with by what Teilhard reveals as 'a new way of seeing'.

The extreme of suffering endured by Jesus, while being the focus

point of 'a new beginning' in growth of human consciousness was not an 'isolated case'. The Romans of that era used crucifixion as their form of capital punishment; historians have documented incidents where upwards of a hundred persons were crucified at a single location on a given day. What the crucifixion of Jesus signified was a change in the 'collective recognition' that suffering is an integral dynamic in the process by which human consciousness is 'transformed' from a level just beyond animal consciousness to the next level beyond it---which we can come to 'know/comprehend' only by the inner experience of it 'within ourselves'. Like a match igniting dry tundra, the crucifixion started the wildfire that has been the 'Christian Era'. Actually the 'fire metaphor' is used continually by Teilhard in his 'explanation' of the 'Christian Phenomenon'.



## Going It Alone Continued...

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So, to put it bluntly, what is the human/genetic origin of our preoccupation with 'blood and gore'? Most likely it derives from the stage of 'hunter/gatherer' evolutionary stage of human species. It could be that it was the 'male of the species' did most of the hunting, while the women were mostly 'gatherers' picking the nuts, healing plants and berries. That may explain the fact that even domestic violence is statistically more a 'male phenomenon' than female.

When man the hunter faced the immediate prospect of dispatching a muskox, Nature provided an 'adrenalin rush' that is associated in contemporary clinical terms with 'dopamine'. Somewhat the same result is experienced by the effects of 'substances'---'magic mushroom'/LSD/Mescaline/even to a minor degree 'Cannabis'. The term 'drug abuse' should rightly be turned around to read drug use/abuse---but that is another story.

Suffice it to say that 'blood and gore' triggers in us a physical response which is 'vestigial', as outmoded for human survival as our Appendix' which has no bodily importance now other than to be removed when it becomes infected.

Mel Gibson is undoubtedly an extremely talented individual in the art and craft of filmmaking, but his motivations may derive mainly from the marketing aspirations of the film industry---bums on cinema seats is the top priority, so whether the blood and gore comes from the

bible or from last week's horror pic makes no significant difference. If he were more of a Teacher in the Media Field, then he would have done things a little differently.

My 'field' in the communications domain is that of a theorist/commentator in the thread initially unravelled by Marshall McLuhan---whom I came to know personally in my work with National Film Board. I once asked McLuhan if he had been 'influenced' by Teilhard de Chardin. He replied that most of his 'influences' were from the French Troubadours and the English Romantic Poets. Once when I walked into his University of Toronto office he exclaimed, "Your face is the map of Ireland".

But other McLuhan Influences as detailed by Wikipedia are Harold Innes, G.K. Chesterton, and James Joyce. If I were so vain as to take myself really seriously, I would contend that fifty years later we begin to have 'intuition' that supersedes or at least suggests a 'thought-extension' to the media prospect envisaged by McLuhan. I recommend to students of pastoral theology that they include on their reading-list, in addition to Aristotle, Augustine and Nietzsche, works by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and such current cosmology-theorists as Stephen McIntosh,

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## Life Is A Song

by Hank Mattimore, San Jose, CA

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A very wise Indian guru by the name of Sai Baba advised his followers to make singing an integral part of life. He told them "Life is a song. Sing it."

Yes, I like that dude. When we sing we make our own kind of magic.

My new granddaughter is cute as a teddy bear and is blessed with a pair of lungs that any Met soprano would die for. So, in the midst of one her baby arias, I was delighted to see my son take her in his arms off to a quiet corner and sing to her. Oh, she didn't stop immediately; (Her dad is not a miracle worker) but she did pay attention to his voice and little by little calmed down.

Once again I was witnessing the magical power of song.

At the other end of the age spectrum, in my role as a respite worker for an elderly gentleman, I have found that nothing raises his spirits more than joining him in singing some of the oldie songs.

Legally blind and living in the narrow confines of a mobile home park, "John" has reason to feel depressed at times.

But I see him transformed when he and I crank up the vocal chords with our rendition of "Five foot two, eyes of blue" or "Walking on the sunny side of the street." What fun!

Singing at any age has a way of awakening the soul.

I love those semi spontaneous crowd song fests we see on Facebook from time to time. Don't you?

Who can stay in a blue mood when you hear a group of folks break into song with the Alleluia chorus in a shopping mall.

I don't know about you but I have this irresistible urge to join them.



# All I Have Now, Unknowing!, & Horizon

by John Chuchman, Bellaire, MI

## *All I Have Is Now by John Chuchman (Sept. 2015)*

Having spent too little of my conscious and unconscious time in the Present Moment, I now strive to do that. I am influenced by my past, but am also influenced by my future through anticipation about what might happen then, along with any related fear and anxiety. So, though I know that the Future does not yet exist, my thoughts about it affect me in the NOW. The Past and the Future do flow together for me in the Whirlpool that is the Present Moment. I carry in me the legacy of what I did, felt, thought in the past. My anticipations, fears, anxieties about the future strongly affect me NOW. I seek to dispel these thoughts by continuously telling myself that, just as any feelings I now have about events in the past will not change the past, fears and anxieties about the future will not change the future. So maybe now I can approach both my Past and my Future with an openness, an inclusiveness, an acceptance, by simply taking more time having a long loving look at what IS.

Love, John

## *Unknowing! (Jan. 2015)*

It has been very hard for me to learn not to need to know. I don't mean just simply being OK with not knowing, but learning not to need to know. It requires my admitting, accepting, embracing my limits. I realize that God cannot be known by the power of intelligence. In coming to the realization that God's very Being is Love, I have only been able to glimpse, taste, pursue the Divine in my heart which constantly longs for Love, for my Creator. The terms I have used to speak of God are never clearly intelligible, watertight and hermetically sealed. God can never be seized by my rational analysis. I am invited into Love by my Creator Who is Love and Love is a mystery, as am I.

Only by moving out of my mind and into my Heart can I come close to reaching a Fullness of BEING.

*The Journal*

## *Horizon*

I used to think of mystery as something to be solved, mistakenly believing there's always an answer at the end when I solve it. But mystery is inexhaustible depth. It's infinite. Mystery is on the horizon. As I move toward the horizon, I never get to it. I have a restless heart that is always yearning for something more, looking for something more. That longing is God: infinite mystery, drawing me near. God is horizon, not island. An island is concrete. I can circle it. I can circumnavigate it. I can get out on it, walk around. I can measure it.

God is not the island. God is the horizon beyond the island.

God is what allows me to experience the island. If people don't have something a little deeper than an old man in the sky, when they hit the existential angst of life — be it a spouse dying, disease, war, crime, whatever it is — what's going to happen? We definitely experience things in life that we want God to fix and God doesn't.

I think it takes those upheavals in life to shake up one's image of God.



John Chuchman is a bereavement counsellor. He is a graduate of John Carroll University and former Ford Motor Company executive (1959-1992). He has been a Hospice volunteer since 1990. John has received Pastoral Bereavement Counselor certification and a Certificate in Spirituality (Kino Institute of Phoenix, Arizona.) In 2000, he was awarded a Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Ministries from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. His website provides information about his regular retreats and information about his books. he also writes a "Poetman" blog which you can find on the website or via this link: [\[Visit John's blog\]](#) | [\[Visit John's website\]](#)

# Pope Francis Meets With Former Priests & Families

by Michael Duggan, PhD, Calgary, AB

The Pope met seven families at a local apartment. They were the families of young men who decided to leave the priesthood within the past few years. The Vatican Press Office informed that the Pope's visit was intended as a sign of closeness and affection to these young men who in many cases made a choice that was not met with the approval of their confrères and relatives. The get-together marked the final "Mercy Friday" visit in a series of monthly initiatives held to mark the Jubilee Year. Pope Francis was therefore keen to visit these young people: four of them from the diocese of Rome, where they served as parish priests in different parishes across the city, one from Madrid and another from Latin America, both living in Rome, while another hailed from Sicily.

The Pope's arrival was met with great enthusiasm, the Holy See Press Office reports: "The children huddled around the Pope to hug him, while their parents were unable to hide their emotion." The Holy Father's visit was greatly appreciated by all those present who felt nothing but closeness and affection from the Pope, who was not judgemental". Time flew. The Pope "listened to their stories and took great interest in hearing their thoughts on the development since the legal proceedings for each of their cases. With his fatherly words, he reassured everyone present of his friendship and personal interest." Francis' gesture was "yet another act towards those experiencing spiritual or material strife, highlighting that no one should be deprived of the love and support of



pastors." The Pope has a truly engaging way of relating to people. The visit ended at around 5:20 pm.

One of the former priests whom Francis met during his visit was particularly significant. "I was surprised when I heard the news, I only found out about it a few days ago, and I was surprised that the Pope thought of us. Pope Francis is no ordinary bishop. My first sensation was that something purely evangelical had happened." he said.

"I hope," he underlined, "that by following the Pope's example, despite the fact we all have different stories, we can go on being a resource for the Church. All of us would like to carry on being of use to the Christian community; it would be great if the barriers could be overcome. After all, aside from our priestly ordination, which can never be erased, we are all baptised. It would be wonderful if we could go on doing some

good as I have sought to do in a different manner." "I will never forget this 'Mercy Friday'." He ended by saying.

"A crowd of around 50 people gathered beneath my house when word got round that the Pope was coming. Someone said to me: 'You really did a great thing; Well done'. To which I immediately responded: 'It's precisely because I'm not great that the Pope's coming here today; otherwise, he may never have come'. I was overjoyed by his visit and I hope it will help me be a better human being."

## Excerpted From St. Brigid's Newsletter

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

There are some 150 women worldwide who function as priests, in defiance of the Catholic Church. They perform baptisms and weddings and celebrate mass in house churches.

But after Pope Benedict issued a decree in 2010, all those women were automatically excommunicated from the church.

Pope Francis has said he thinks the Roman Catholic church's ban on priestly ordination for women will continue forever, saying his predecessor Pope John Paul II's declaration on the matter "goes in that direction." Francis expressed his thoughts on the subject in response to a question Tuesday from a journalist aboard the papal flight back to Rome after a two-day visit to Sweden. The journalist, a Swede, mentioned that among those who welcomed Francis during his visit was Lutheran Archbishop Antje Jackelen of Uppsala. Jackelen is the primate of the Church of Sweden and a woman.

"Is it realistic to think that there might be women priests also in the Catholic church in the next few decades?" the journalist asked the pope. "On the ordination of women in the Catholic church, the last word is clear," Francis responded.

"Father Richard Rohr OFM offered a prayer for those who are hurting today. He invites us to take a contemplative pause to feel whatever we and those close to us are feeling, to be still, to center and ground ourselves in Love's presence. Only from this place of union with Love can we then take the necessary actions for peace and healing." - Center for Action and Contemplation

All vulnerable and merciful God,

We do not know what is ours to do.

We feel scared and alone today.

We are tired of taking sides.

We cannot hold any more fear or anger or rejection.

And yet we know so many of our friends feel unheard and unwanted.

Help us trust that no feeling is final,

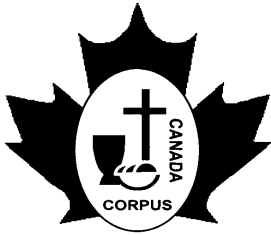
And that YOU will have the full and final word.

If You are indeed a Suffering God, may we hold this suffering with You.

We offer ourselves as best we can to hold this Love outward and open toward all, just as You never cease to do toward us.

We believe You are praying this prayer through us.

Amen



# Corpus Canada

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**Dear Friends,**

We share a dream: a Church that celebrates what is good in us and calls forth what is best in us; a Church that is honest enough to confess not only the sins of its members but the sin that is built into its very structure and corporate practices; a Church that is catholic enough to include the children of Rome, Constantinople and the Protestant Reformation; a Church that proclaims the intrinsic goodness of human sexuality and any expression of it that creates and sustains loving relationships; a Church that gives its members full scope to exercise all the gifts and charisms the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them; a Church that makes assistance for the poorest and most persecuted of people its highest priority. Through Corpus Canada we keep this dream alive.

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Yours truly,

Arthur Menu

On behalf of Corpus Canada

# 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.

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