

# THE COLLOQUY

## GREETINGS CLC ATLANTIC,

As we find ourselves in the midst of Advent 2015, let us continue to prepare our hearts, minds, homes and communities... not only for the feasting and celebrations of the Christmas Season that lie ahead, but for the many immediate needs presenting themselves, at this particular time, within the immense influx of refugee families fleeing to our country due to grave injustices against humanity. May each of us respond lovingly, compassionately and generously, keeping in mind our CLC commitment to "place our gifts at the service of the poor", remembering the Christ Child's poverty and the Living Word: "whatever you do to others, you do unto me," along with the encouraging words of Pope Francis that invite us to "go out" in the spirit of true solidarity.

We live in a critical period; a time when the spirit of pastoral evangelization is most desperately needed; a time when our Christian values are truly being tested; a time when the call is perhaps echoing louder and more urgently than ever before; and perhaps a time that is begging for us to consider with greater intentionality:

- .... What have I done for Christ?
- .... What am I doing for Christ?
- .... What more can I do for Christ?

May God bless us abundantly, as our personal and communal responses unfold!

Sandy Mudge, Colloquy editor



BRINGING

ADVENT

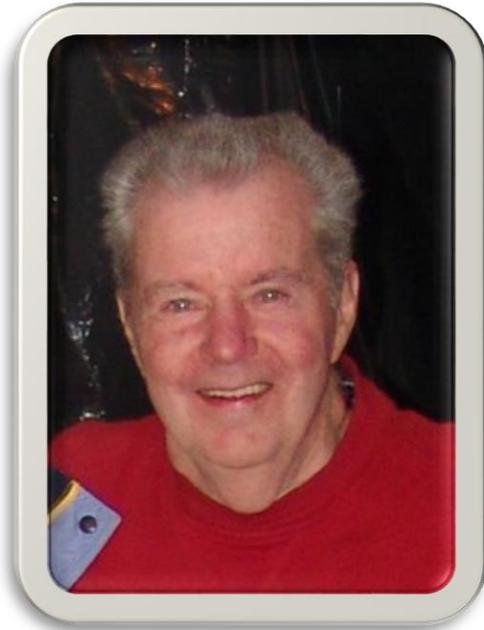
BLESSINGS

AS CLC ATLANTIC REGION, **WE ARE CALLED** TO PLACE OUR GIFTS  
AT THE SERVICE OF THE POOR, ASSISTED BY CLC DEVELOPMENT FOR THIS MISSION

# Regional

## Coordinator's

### Message



On the weekend of October 30<sup>th</sup>, our Regional Council meeting was held in Saint John. Many graces were received as we reflected on the experiences of Oscar Romero and Pope Francis, and their similar views concerning the poor and underprivileged. On Saturday, we had an opportunity to hear input from everyone present regarding an experience of personal fear that they had encountered stepping into a ministry situation. It was like having 22 personal presentations... very moving and heart felt! Later in the day, Pam Daigle used flip chart visuals to help us understand where we are in the process of moving forward in regards to our Regional Common Mission. We were given formation on the 'Life Death Resurrection Cycle' in decision making and a visual of four rooms was used to indicate where communities might possibly be in the various stages of CLC development. Each contact was encouraged to take this information back to their communities.

On another note, a few people will be finishing their terms on ExCo in the Spring, and these positions will need to be filled. I want to encourage each CLC community to prayerfully consider names to fill these positions. (Regional Coordinator, Publication Coordinator, and Treasurer). As you have already been reminded in Leah's letter, as our National President, CLC leadership is the responsibility of all. The position of Regional Coordinator will definitely need to be filled, as I will not be able to continue in this role. A description of each of the outstanding roles will be sent out early in the New Year.

Blessings,

Bob

# Advent 2015

## Growing in an Advent Spirit Through Our Advent Traditions

*Trevor Scott, s.j*



Ever since we turned the clocks back an hour a few weeks ago, it is astonishing how short our daylight hours have become. By around 5:00 in the late afternoon, it seems like it is 11:00 in the evening. It is quite astonishing, really. Whenever I reflect upon the season of Advent, this is always the context I am mindful of - night. We are deep in the darkness of the season - the deepest darkness.... and it leaves a knot in my stomach, a hunger for escape, to be in

any other season but this one. Only 3 months ago, I was hiking into the evening hours deep in the forested hills and along the shoreline of Lake Superior. At around 8:00 in the evening I was mindful that I had to eventually make my way back to the car before darkness fell and wouldn't be able to see the path before me. But at 8:00 in the evening, the sun was still aglow radiating my path by showering sun beams down all around me. There was no sense of danger and imminence of time. In this time of Advent, we are in a different space in which we are not dwelling in light, but desiring it.

One of our traditions in this Advent season is the gradual lighting of an Advent wreath. As each of the four weeks of Advent progresses, we light an additional candle, signifying the approaching light of Christ in our midst. This is the primary symbolism of Advent - the growing light that shines in the midst of our darkness... a growing light that gradually overtakes the darkness we have been submerged in. As the Autumn season progresses, and with it



the shortening of our daylight hours, and Jean-Marc and I sit down to dinner each evening in our community here in Halifax at 6:00 - it is dark. I am intentional that the candle we have placed on our dinner table is lit for each meal. I am also intentional that the overhead lights are not too bright. Because though dwelling in darkness can be demoralizing, dwelling in an abundance of artificial light overhead - especially florescent - can also be deflating. And so the lamps around us in the dining room are turned on, and the candle lit, casting a soft glow upon our surroundings. This is the kind of light that is shed from the Advent candles. This light of Advent, the light of Christ, is a soft, inviting and atmospheric light, gradually growing in our midst. Once again, at this time of year we are invited to enter into the atmosphere of our Christian faith - into the gently inviting light of its graces and blessings.



Another sign of Advent you will find around Lake Superior at this time of year, in addition to being plunged into darkness much earlier in the day, is the mark of the forest - it lacks signs of life, with so much of it stripped of its leaves and colour. Lake Superior, at this time of year, is a much more barren place to be. This image by Lawren Harris captures, so well, this barrenness that is prevalent all around us at this time of year. The lush canopy of our environment, the striking colours of the leaves, have all descended to the forest floors to wither away, leaving the branches exposed and lifeless. But, as we know, this lifelessness will not remain. New growth will once again be seen and entered into. Faith in new life is what keeps us going; it is what enables us to endure the lack of life's signs that have come upon us at this time in our lives.

It is with this faith in new life in mind, that many of us enter into another Advent tradition. With the beginning of Advent we set up a Jesse tree... a family tree that gradually reveals to us, with signs and symbols, the story of all that our Lord has done for us since the beginning of Creation. For the prophet Isaiah tells us:

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*

*The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Writing at a time of great struggle among the dispersed Israelites, Isaiah told them that their darkness and destruction was not permanent; that new life would arise among them once again from the stump of their destroyed nation. We call it a Jesse tree because the Hebrew root word of Jesse is "Saviour" ... Jesus. It is from the lineage of Jesse, the Father of King David, that Jesus arises in our midst. With each day of Advent, a story from this family tree is remembered and told, relating how God prepared for his Son's arrival in our world. This small shoot is a sign of new life and new beginnings, the beginning of a new story.



This time of year can be such a mournful time of year - a time to lament the diminishment of our daylight hours, and the barrenness of life that seems to overwhelm us - a lament that the early Israelites experienced in Isaiah's own lifetime. But Isaiah writes in encouragement - to the Israelites in his day, and to us in our own day, saying,

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those  
who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them  
abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the  
harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils.....Isaiah 9*

## CESAR CHAVEZ: SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

*In giving of yourself, you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love. --Cesar Chavez [1]*

Though he is fondly remembered by Mexican Americans, Cesar Chavez is not otherwise well known in the United States, so I will share some of the details of his life. Cesar Chavez (1927-1993) was born in Arizona to Mexican American parents. He experienced discrimination and racism from a young age and, when his parents' farm failed during the severe drought of the 1930s, he suffered poverty too. Rather than continue on to high school after finishing eighth grade, Chavez began working on farms in California.

From his experience in the fields, Chavez knew the very real needs of farm workers and the injustice of agri-business. Through nonviolent actions--such as boycotts, marches, pickets, strikes, and fasting--he advocated for laborers' rights to fair wages and working conditions. Chavez's rallying motto was "*Si, se puede*"--Yes, one can! Yes, we can make a difference.

Though not formally educated beyond eighth grade, Chavez drew inspiration from reading, particularly about St. Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. My Franciscan brothers in California told me that they knew personally that Cesar Chavez and his wife awoke early every day to say the rosary next to their bed. Their children grew up hearing this. Talk about a true catechism class!

With Dolores Huerta, Chavez founded the National Farm Workers Association (which later became United Farm Workers). The organization joined Filipino American farm laborers in a strike

against grape growers in California. The strike began in 1965 and continued for five years, gaining national attention, with thousands of Americans boycotting table grapes. It culminated in contracts for fair wages.

The grape strike was important not just for the workers involved. In the words of Chavez's biographer, Jacques Levy: "To us the boycott of grapes was the most near-perfect of nonviolent struggles, because nonviolence also requires mass involvement. The boycott demonstrated to the whole country, the whole world, what people can do by nonviolent action. Nonviolence in the abstract is a very difficult thing to comprehend or explain. . . . It's difficult to carry the message to people who aren't involved. Nonviolence must be explained in context." [2]

The grape boycott showed that solidarity through actions and not just words is essential. Levy writes, "Often only talk results when a person with social concern wants to do something for the underdog nonviolently. But just talking about change is not going to bring it about. . . . Nonviolence becomes just an ideology, something to write about, read about, or talk about while still being very comfortable. The ideology becomes a luxury, not a way of life. And nothing can be changed while being comfortable." [3] I guess far too many of us are what they call "limousine liberals."

When you agree to live simply, you do not consider the immigrant, the refugee, the homeless person, or the foreigner as a threat to you or see them as being in competition with you. You have chosen their marginal state for yourself--freely and consciously becoming "visitors and pilgrims" in this world, as St. Francis puts it (quoting 1 Peter 2:11). A simple lifestyle is quite simply an act of solidarity with the way most people have lived since the beginnings of humanity. It is

thus *restorative justice* instead of the world's very limited and punitive notion of retributive justice. [4]

Retributive justice and violence are the lazy and quite uncreative way to approach the problem of evil. Restorative solutions require much more from us, and not just others, and thus bring about transformation in both ourselves and in the world. Chavez writes:

I don't subscribe to the belief that nonviolence is cowardice, as some militant groups are saying. In some instances, nonviolence requires more militancy than violence. Nonviolence forces you to abandon the shortcut, in trying to make a change in the social order. Violence, the shortcut, is the trap people fall into when they begin to feel that it is the only way to attain their goal. When these people turn to violence it is a very savage kind.

When people are involved in something constructive, trying to bring about change, they tend to be less violent than those who are not engaged in rebuilding or in anything creative. Nonviolence forces one to be creative; it forces any leader to go to the people and get them involved so that they can come forth with new ideas. I think that once people understand the strength of nonviolence--the force it generates, the love it creates, the response that it brings from the total community--they will not be willing to abandon it easily. [5]

(above article was written by Richard Rohr and appeared in his Daily Meditation online on Oct.29,2015)



## THOUGHTS ON CHARITY AND JUSTICE

(taken from [blog@jesuits.ca](mailto:blog@jesuits.ca) and posted by Erik Oland SJ)

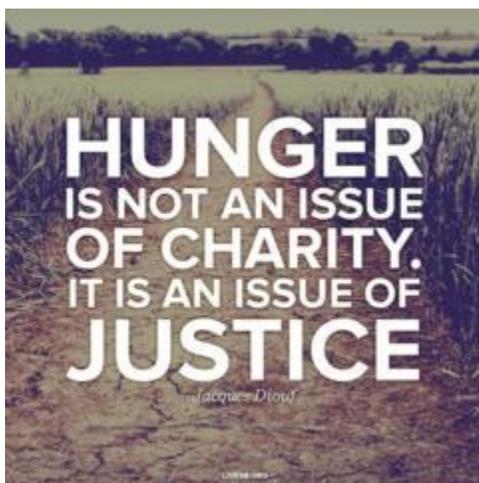
I have had a few intense conversations over the past year about charity and justice. As the result, I've been mulling over the meaning of these two virtues so important to our Christian tradition (and to the traditions of all people of good will). My 'mulling' has gone something like this: people tend to use the terms loosely, indistinctly, and forget how they relate to each other.



(Source: finelinesolution.com)

On one side, charity, mis-defined as 'charitable works,' in turn can be conflated with justice, and risk side-stepping the root causes of the great poverty and injustices that exist in our world. This is sometimes called 'do-goodism,' an individualistic response to an immediate need rather than an

expanding awareness of the bigger picture and decisions to try to do something at a societal level. Indeed, it may point to a resistance in looking at how one might be contributing to any number of injustices in the first place.



(Source: pinterest.com)

For example, an individual who faithfully gives alms to his parish or her favourite charity but never reflects on the structures that necessitate these very gifts may be living in the 'ism' of the doing good mode. The same goes for the parish that raises big bucks to support local causes or to support a sister parish in a developing country but never reflects on the structures that create the need for such acts of charity.

It could be as simple as researching where our local supermarket buys its bananas and asking the question, do local farmers suffer as the result of a multi-national forcing a cash crop on them to the detriment of their ability to

grow the food they need to feed their own families. **True justice desires to change the structures that produce the needs and injustices in the first place.**

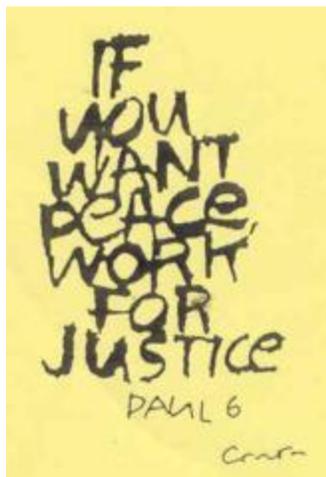
Conversely, justice, detached from charity can miss the basic Christian stance of 'love' and can get caught in theorizing about how to change unjust structures. This might sound good in the academic/think tank sphere but in the end, human beings (and all of Creation) can be objectified with the dignity of human person becoming subservient to an abstract sense of the collectivity (and the abuses of power that follow).



(Source: [gvisionaries.wordpress.com](http://gvisionaries.wordpress.com))

Justice, in the biblical sense, is much more than changing oppressive structures. It involves at the outset a conversion of heart. In the Christian context it is possible only in a world view that includes love of God and of neighbour, even if that neighbour happens to be an enemy. It involves a commitment to solidarity with those who are most downtrodden.

Mother Theresa is a good example, whose work with the Missionaries of Charity has become symbolic of God's abiding love in a world that is often devoid of it. At the same time, the simple hands on work of countless sisters and volunteers continues to draw global attention to the plight of the untouchables in India. In essence, **true justice comes as a result of an already present stance of charity arising from a deep and felt knowledge that the loving hand of God is at work in the world**, no matter how bad things might seem to be.



(Source: [Stpeterscatholic.org](http://Stpeterscatholic.org))

Pope Benedict wrote a beautiful letter entitled Caritas in veritate where he describes charity as "an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace." (Benedict XVI Caritas in veritate 1)

One might say that charity is the basic stance from which justice flows. Charity is a stance of being and justice is one of action; the two are intimately related. Charity is the heart pumping blood throughout the body and justice is the limbs that get their energy from the blood being pumped. Without the heart the body would be limp and incapable of action.

# Living Today Using Insights from the Life of St. Ignatius of Loyola

## THE SIMPLE LIFE

*"Sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.  
Then come, follow me."* (Matthew 19:21)

Fr. John W. O'Malley, S.J. writes in *The First Jesuits*, that St. Ignatius' personal experience fairly early in his conversion journey persuaded him that too severe of an understanding of "actual poverty" hindered his attempts "to help souls." Later, he and his companions in the Society saw even more clearly the impracticality of such an understanding to sell all material possessions as they began to establish their institutions. It was a different poverty than that of St. Francis of Assisi, but genuine nevertheless. The poverty of the Jesuits focused more on spiritual detachment or poverty in spirit, enabling them to found, own, fund and run institutions, such as universities.

St. Ignatius' approach to a simple life has been helpful to us in the 21st century, as it simply invites us to "live simply." It is a sensible simplicity; a moderate asceticism; a healthy poverty. In the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (called the "Two Standards"), St. Ignatius asks us to imagine Christ calling people to his side: to a simple life, denouncing the desire for honors and desiring a life of humility. Christ is inviting us to enjoy a life free from attachments.

### **HOW DO YOU LIVE SIMPLY?**

While those with a vocation to live in a religious community and share all things in common are called to give up all individual ownership of material possessions, the faithful Catholic in our community is probably not called to give up everything. However, as a faithful Catholic, can you simplify your life and respond to the invitation to live with less stuff coming between you and God?

We have three steps to assist you in this effort (each step progresses with increasing difficulty), then we offer a challenge. In all these things, place your trust in God to help you along this path, because it is a path to a freedom from attachments, which God desires for you.

#### **1) Get rid of whatever you don't need.**

It's the obvious first step to simplifying. What should you do with all that stuff? As stated in the Gospel, the extra coat you're not using doesn't belong to you: it belongs to the poor. Connect with such places as Catholic Charities, or Hope Community Center or a shelter (Coalition for the Homeless) or a clothing distribution center (Christian Sharing Center or Goodwill) to offer your clothing to the poor and needy.

How do you know you don't need it? One trick that organizers teach us is to go to your closet and hang all your clothes with the hanger in the reverse direction. (It takes extra effort to remove the clothing). When you wear the item and return it to the closet, hang it in the correct direction. Then after six months, check which items are still hanging in the reverse direction. This should be an indication to you that you haven't needed this item and would be a candidate for the clothing distribution center.

A word of friendly advice: don't give your junky stuff to the poor – toss it out. Ask yourself, would you wear it in its current condition? If you wouldn't, then toss it out. The poor deserve decent clothes, just like you do. Keep in mind the biblical principal of "**First Fruits**". The idea was the opposite of merely giving your left overs. It is not sacrificial to merely give what you don't want or need. Christ gave us his very life, his substance, so that we might live as a result of his sacrifice. It is good to follow his example of how to live and love.

## **2) Distinguish between wants and needs.**

Is it "nice to have" or "need to have?" Do you "need" a bigger television or the latest SMART phone or the newest computer? Or is it something you want because your friends just bought one or because you've seen it advertised? It's difficult to resist the desire to have what your friends have and what Madison Avenue says you need, but again, turning these things down leads to freedom.

Think of it like a diet. Hard as it is, you feel better if you avoid unnecessary calories. You'll also feel better if you avoid unnecessary purchases – lighter, healthier, freer. Go on a "*buying diet*."

## **3) Get rid of things you think you need, but can actually live without.**

This goes beyond things you know you don't need into things you believe you need, but can, in a pinch, forego. Bishop Robert Morneau of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, offers this valuable suggestion on giving away our personal items. "*Try to give away one thing a day. If someone admires something you have, offer to give it to them.*" This practice will help you to become detached to the many possessions in our life and experience the joy of giving.

## **4) THE CHALLENGE: Get to know the poor.**

This may be very difficult for some of us. Find opportunities to volunteer at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter (each week a different ministry at St. Mary Magdalen Parish volunteers to serve dinner at either the Coalition for the Homeless or Pathways to Care. Call the parish office to be connected to these ministries). Doing so on a regular basis will help you to know them not as the "poor" but as individuals with their own stories. They will have often suffered much, and it may, initially, be hard to be around them. But they can also teach you a great deal about gratitude, about perseverance and about being close to God.

( taken from an internet source)

## JULY 26, 2015 CLC RETREAT WITH TREVOR SCOTT SJ: RECAP

I was approached to do a write up of this day, but after seeing what an excellent job Pam Daigle did with the Recap, I knew that there was no need to express anything differently...her deep listening skills and profound wisdom had captured it all so beautifully! So with her permission, I offer Pam's Recap of the day..... ( editor's note)

40 gathered at the Villa for our CLC retreat day. Nine CLCers from other areas joined us. Preparatory material relating to our Regional statement of common mission and Fr. Trevor's retreat theme was sent mid-July to help us enter into the morning's first session. St. Gabriel Room was beautifully set up with cloth covered round tables and an environment prepared by Betty Poley and Margaret Melanson. Our familiar 'icon' of St. Ignatius welcomed us in the foyer.



### **SESSION 1: 11:00-12:00** **Opening and Telling Our Stories**

Peter Chouinard and Charlena Keenan-Bourque warmly welcomed us and lead us into prayerful disposition for sharing our personal stories. Two to three rounds of table conversations, facilitated by members of our NB Guide Community, inspired and challenged us to see how our own personal histories held the seeds of learning how to 'be with' and 'respond to' the poor. After brief table feedback, we broke for a time of lunch and socializing.

### **SESSION # 2: 12:30-2:00**

#### **A RENEWED PASTORAL AWARENESS OF THE CHURCH THROUGH THE THOUGHTS OF POPE FRANCIS**

Fr. Trevor gathered us after lunch to open up our understanding of our call as Church to the need for a renewed pastoral awareness and formation. We experienced his presentation through word and image....

***He began with a projected image – an icon of Christ Embracing a person in mercy. His comments followed. These are captured below almost verbatim:***

Our Church does not give witness to **this** Christ-like presence. We have become disassociated from this way of life. Our Church is being seen in a new light recently, especially by those who are indifferent (though not necessarily antagonistic) - partly because of Pope Francis. Many are hearing his renewed pastoral emphasis and seeing Christ-like love for the poor and marginalized in a more direct way.

In the next session we will see part of the recent film, 'Les Miserables', based on the novel by Victor Hugo. In his day (the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century), Victor Hugo would have been one of these individuals – leaning toward atheism, always criticizing the Church. In his novel, he makes his point with the Bishop of Digne, using him to show Christ as the model of Christianity. Many in today's world would not understand the theological underpinnings of our Christian faith – and they can be harsh toward us, but their criticism has its truth. People have to grapple with this. We are not credible witnesses in their eyes. We cannot dismiss this!

#### **Fr. Trevor returns to the icon of Jesus on the screen...**

Jesus never 'detached' himself from people. He never saw them as a nuisance. He noticed them. He went out to them in direct contact. His was a helping and healing presence. He accompanied them. In his day; there was no provision for compassion, pity or mercy. There were no 'structures' at that time to carry this like we have today. His was a world of apathy. But Jesus responded to those around him with love, affection and care. He took notice of those in pain and of those who were marginalized. He talked with them, he shared their experiences, their emotions through the way he accompanied them and taught them.

#### **Fr. Trevor then shows a series of paintings which image Jesus doing this...**

#### **Then he continues...**

Are we growing blind to how we live our Christian lives? Ignorance or indifference and judgment upon us has no evangelical value. We cannot dismiss those eyes watching us!

Pope Francis identifies spiritual enemies that are there that prevent us from living a true Christian life... In a talk in Dec. 2014, he directs his comments to his Curia, but in reality they also apply to us... He speaks of:

- Spiritual narcissism
- Excessive activity
- Spiritual alzheimers (forgetting the spirit of the gospel)

Our Church's compelling message (mercy) is not getting through. We have become too distant, caught up in ourselves, too cozy... and are being a relic of the past unfit for the new.

What about Jesus in his time? Jesus had his own detractors – but he ENGAGED them. He did this respectfully and mercifully – and he taught his disciples (us) to respond the same way. This is what Pope Francis is doing. This is what we mean by PASTORAL MERCY and CARE. We must see it, hear it, understand it through how we are with the suffering around us (in whatever form – material, emotional, spiritual). We must smell like the sheep. Everyone understands and responds to pastoral language, if we speak and act it, versus theological language. Start Speaking it! This doesn't mean instead of a theological basis - but on top of it.

In February 2015 the Pope spoke to his cardinals – about how they were to live and act. He told them that their first priority (and therefore ours) is to seek out and welcome those around them. This he called **ENGAGEMENT** – to be attentive to outsiders, to go beyond ourselves and our comfort zones. This means we need a **PASTORAL CONVERSION!** The credibility of our Church will

be based on how we are present to the marginalized and the poor.... The 'gospel of the marginalized'.

**Trevor returns to the icon of Jesus on the screen ... and says....** It rests on THIS way of being in our world! It is about speaking a **PASTORAL LANGUAGE** through **CONTACT**, through the same kind of **PRESENCE** Jesus brought into his world.... A presence that healed, restored life to the dead (physically and spiritually). How do we learn this language? How can we be a more healing presence in people's lives? It's not about the growth of the Church, or how to bring people back to Mass. It's not about how to restore the Church as it once was. It's about deepening our relationship with others in the life of Christ. It's to allow people to see and hear God through us – through our touch, through our 'pastoral contact' with them.

**Trevor then showed a picture of the Pope caressing the face of a man with a disease which disfigured his face (and body). He then showed various pictures of him in his growing years and citing several commentaries, he quoted him or described his experiences of isolation. He highlighted the man's moment of being so lovingly touched by the Pope. These images and 'story of suffering' brought his session to closure with the following words:**

Christ calls us to come out of ourselves and be with those who suffer – to touch suffering ... physical and material suffering, yes, but also existentially – as it is experienced in sin, pain and injustice. Pope Francis said we 'must rediscover the maternal womb of mercy'! If we can't do this, our world will judge us harshly – and rightly so – because we are not close to people in 'human relating' the way Jesus did. As a Church, we need to be more Christ-like!

**We were then given** two handout choices (*Matt. 25 and The Road to Emmaus*) with suggestions and focus questions for prayer. This was followed by personal space, then small group conversation in designated areas. A half hour silent break followed and many took advantage of the quiet in nature as they continued to ponder the impact of their own prayer and the group sharing.

### **SESSION #3: 2:30-4:00**

#### **The Pastoral Formation of the Bishop of Digne and Encounter with Jean Val-Jean**

In this session, Fr. Trevor began by projecting on screen a book-picture of the real bishop of Digne - a man interested in injustice, in the poverty of his time. He was loved by all and it was said that "the compassion of God was his center of gravity." He then spoke of how the 19<sup>th</sup> century penal system of incarceration was so oppressive even when released, stigma followed prisoners through having to report and show parole papers wherever they went, forever.

Fr. Trevor's main point in this session was that forgiveness and transformation are interconnected. Even the most hardened criminal, through grace, can be redeemed. For Jean Val-Jean, this journey begins with the Bishop of Digne.

In the film version of 'Les Miserables', the bishop is somewhat romanticised as a pious man of light and love within. But it does not show us that the bishop had, needed, his own 'pastoral conversion' which was true of the real, historical, 19<sup>th</sup> century bishop of Digne. Through Fr. Trevor's research, we heard that he was a man of compassion who chose to live in simplicity and to give most of his salary to the poor. He travelled his diocese to be with those who suffered. However, he had a particular prejudice towards those who revolted against the monarchy which he supported. His own pastoral conversion occurred through an encounter he had with an old revolutionary who lived in isolation – in 'a hole' about one hour's walk from his village. The bishop eventually, reluctantly went to visit him on his own terms and in judgement, to invite him

to repent and to give him absolution for his 'sin'. However, in the encounter, the bishop comes to see the injustices of the monarchy to which he had been blind. And he comes to accept that progress must come not necessarily through the Church and its beliefs "as it was". In the end, the bishop sought forgiveness and absolution from the revolutionary. The bishop's 'pastoral conversion' came through "contact", from being in relationship with". He realized that life is full of complexities and things are not simply clear cut. His beliefs and prejudices were challenged. And love for others became even more pronounced in him.

Fr. Trevor then opened up the story of Jean Val-Jean and his encounter with the bishop of Digne. **He showed us the powerful scene** from the film where the bishop encounters Jean Val-Jean. He then walked us back through the scenes as they related to the grace of forgiveness and the beginning of Jean Val-Jean's transformation. He invited us to pause and to attend to still pictures of Jean Val-Jean interior confusion in the encounter... we could see grace in action. The close-ups helped us see how Jean Val-jean had no framework to grasp the bishop's response of forgiveness when he was captured and dragged before him. The bishop's offer of silver candlesticks still on his table (representing his 'ancestral' prized possession') symbolize the 'sacramental act' of grace offered to him... this and the words of belief in him to become what the bishop saw in him. This began Jean Val-Jean's journey of transformation. *In the novel* (which was helpful for us to know), the bishop was indeed aware of a 'stranger' in the village and was advised to lock his doors. He refuses, saying, "whatever happens, happens." And we see what happens through the grace of welcome and hospitality.

After being shown images of the 'restored to dignity' Jean Val-Jean, and his 'life of love and service', we were shown a clip of Jean Val-Jean's death scene. Here we saw how that initial grace received, lived out over time, still had another level of healing needed. He had always hidden his past from his adopted daughter for fear of losing her love. Here, it is fully revealed, he is fully 'accepted' and this final act of forgiveness lifts the shame off his soul. Fr. Trevor projected images of Christ on the Cross and a scene of the Transfiguration to help us make the connection. He then projected 2 images of contemporary street persons and asked us: How might we imagine what these persons might become if we offered them the same grace as the bishop of Digne? A powerful question after an impacting 'story' of pastoral transformation!!! We then went off to pray with either the Canaanite woman (a stranger like Jean Val-Jean) or with Bartimaeus, (a blind man like the novel's bishop This was followed by small group conversation and **Liturgy in the chapel from 4:00-5:00.**

A grace-filled CLC retreat day with it's own 'pastoral formation' story needing to continue in us - and through us... a day of encouragement, of challenge, of hope, of blessing!

Pam Daigle, River of Life CLC, N.B.

Be careFUL When you bLINDly

FOLLOW the MaSSes

SOMETIMES the M is SiLent

HIGHLIGHTING THE GRACES  
OF OUR  
FALL REGIONAL COUNCIL



**Friday Evening (Oct.30)**

The Friday evening sharing, provided by contacts from our various local communities, was very representative of the hopes, dreams, accomplishments and struggles being encountered at this time in our journey into the frontiers, as we attempt to en flesh, in an ever deepening manner, our CLC principles and charism under the umbrella of our statement of Regional Common Mission (RCM). It became evident within our circle, that the grace for which we sought at Spring Council: **to gain greater enthusiasm and a deeper understanding of how our RCM is calling us into the frontiers with courage, compassion and trust**, was being received within our communal lives. We could sense that positive energy moving us forward as a region in the direction of concrete mission. Some communities were discerning, in the midst of, or just completing an experience of the spiritual exercises in light of the need to address poverty issues or CLC development. Communities were working through our DSSE process at a number of different stages, also looking through the lense of our Common Mission statement.

Like golden threads woven through a prayer shawl, the words expressing our RCM were weaving themselves throughout the Atlantic Region in Ignatian fashion, and **hope**...once left in the car by Ed Coleman (LOL)... was still very much alive!

**Saturday (Oct.31)**

Saturday walked us through three very valuable and formative sessions:



**Session1 (Fr. Trevor)** reviewed our preparatory material on “Brothers in Spirit and Allies for the Poor: What Connects Pope Francis and Oscar Romero”. Through a mix of prayer, personal reflection and small/large group sharing, we gathered the nourishing fruit of the session like squirrels preparing for a formative feasting!

Some of the morsels collected included:

- The importance of moving into mission joyfully...it is life giving to live out the gospel values; it gives us energy and hope.
- Charity is not sufficient...it must be accompanied with justice.

- Let all you do be done in love.
- We are part of that 20% of the people holding the world's riches!
- There is a sense of desire for forward movement around our RCM.
- Moving forward is a direction...not speed.
- An invitation??? Isaiah 54: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."
- Pastoral conversion is being given as a grace to our Region.
- How do we find concrete ways of being with the poor, coming to know the poor personally and being open and available to hear their stories???
- Let us not forget whose mission this truly is...we are not alone.

Thank you, Fr. Trevor, for taking the time to be with us as our ecclesiastical assistant, for the knowledge and wisdom you impart, all the work you do, both up front and behind the scenes, and for your friendship. We were saddened today in hearing that the Jesuit presence will soon be leaving the Maritimes and we will be losing a large portion of our personal connection with you.



**Session 2 (Jane Abernathy-Parker)** facilitated this session dealing with **Fear in Ministry** and posed the following situations for reflection, which were later shared within two separate large group time frames, one for each situation being considered:

- 1) **Recall a time when you were ministering to someone in need, or were presented with an opportunity to do so, and encountered fear that you could not seem to overcome.**
- 2) **Recall a time when you encountered fear, but were able to overcome it by the grace of God.**

Both group sharings were very powerful! These stories were real witness accounts and very personal, holding the potential to touch and transform the hearts and minds of listeners. We can only imagine how God would use this exercise to continue to form us, and transform us, for mission! Thank you to all who spoke their truth into the circle for the greater glory of God! Thank you for entrusting us with your story!

**And...** thank you, Jane, for stepping up to the plate with "Plan B", when we found out our presenter for this session would not be able to join us. The Spirit truly guided us in "Emanuel" manner!



**Session 3 (Pam Daigle)** led us to consider how what was happening at our council meeting could be better received by local communities. We were given some very valuable handouts that could help address this concern:

- A revised template of a CLC meeting which was geared to better form us and deepen our awareness of how the Trinity is speaking to our communities in light of our RCM
  - A sheet providing deeper insight into the various parts of a meeting and their purpose in light of our movement forward with RCM
- A communal copy depicting our CLC Priorities for mission: world, national and regional, to be voiced before moving into Part 2 of our meeting. This

- practice would connect us more closely at all 3 levels and gradually give us a greater familiarity with the 3 mission statements, so we can live them more fully.
- A chart depicting the CLC stages of growth that communities pass through in their development, which could be a valuable tool in determining at which stage a community finds itself at this time in our RCM journey.
- Excerpts from Pope Francis' address entitled, "Be Sowers of Change-Change of Hearts".

Pam went on to speak about **what distinguishes CLC mission from Christian mission**:

- 1) Mission priorities of the church and the wider CLC
- 2) The 5 CLC criteria for mission
- 3) DSSE way of proceeding

Pam also spoke about the importance of honouring our **images** that may surface in community...how images can hold meaning and could be a good way to hear what God may be speaking to a community. We were invited to consider what image might capture where we are as we are trying to move forward with our mission. Partner sharing helped us to voice these images. She encouraged us to seek the grace of "**listening expectancy**" and attempt to "**embed mission**" within our local meetings. Using a chart of the LDR Cycle and indicating our region's position on it, we could clearly see where our life and energy were presently rising. **The Spirit is moving us forward!**

Thank you, Pam, for sharing your deep insights, wealth of wisdom and formative teachings with us. May we keep alive what you have shared as we return to our individual communities having been so richly  
Blessed!



After dealing with our many practical considerations, the day then came to a close with Eucharist, celebrated by Fr. Trevor, who was assisted during the liturgy by various community members. The thought provoking and inspirational homily was given by Leah Michaud, our national president.

Once again, we headed out in different directions, back to the ordinary time of gathering as community, yet carrying within, the subtle sowings of change!

Sandy Mudge  
Fishers of People, N.B.

# MOVING FORWARD IS DIRECTION...NOT SPEED

(unknown source)

## Community News

### WE COME TO SHARE OUR STORY...



We are a New Brunswick CLC...called to live out our spirituality committed to CLC Principles and Charism; held firmly in place by our three pillars: prayer, mission, community... and rooted deeply in the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius. Our communal story began about ten years ago, in 2006, and as a group of five women seeking a deeper spiritual reality, companionship and support, we were inspired and encouraged by Pam Daigle to explore the CLC way of living. About two years later, with Pam as our guide, we discerned and received our communal name: **Fishers of People**.

After gathering for two more years, we received another member, which increased our numbers to six. For an additional three years, we continued our communal journey of initiation and formation. However, by 2013 the tides began to turn, and **over a one year period**, four of our six members gradually left our community. The face of Fishers of People found itself in the midst of much transformation! We were diminished to a community of only two, greatly altering the dynamics of our group. Initially, we found ourselves dealing with a variety of feelings and struggles, as a result of this unexpected exodus. It was truly a time of mourning and we wondered if we would ever survive as community! In looking back, we may not have, if it were not for the wisdom, direction and support provided by Pam, who continues to guide us to this very day. Pam encouraged us to deal with our feelings and take time to grieve where needed. She also encouraged us to find God in the midst of what we were experiencing, and to be open to graces that God may be desiring to give us at this particular time. This soon led to the adoption of a new grace which we still continue to seek: **that of a generous missionary heart and an openness to further transformation in Christ, as we discover, more fully, our new communal face**.

Our desire and communal action to share the elements of our story, which placed us at various points on the LDR Cycle, was rooted in a sense that it may help other communities deal with their own Life, Death, Resurrection experiences, as they attempt to recognize God's Presence and Action in it all...and the rich nourishment made available, both communally and personally, that holds the potential

to become manna at all CLC levels. We, also, felt that the sharing of our story may deepen others view of our CLC way of living, as well as give hope to other communities who may find themselves losing members for whatever reason. We soon began to recognize how God was transforming our dyings to bring new life... "Death has no victory in Christ"!

The loss of our four members appeared quite devastating at the onset. We had formed a pretty tight bond and each time someone left, it was like experiencing the loss of a family member. So, there definitely was a period of mourning. However, we carried on, seeking various graces of the moment, making adjustments around responsibilities such as doing the agenda and recap through alternating these two tasks, and by taking turns gathering at each other's home for meetings. There was stretching and challenge, but God was definitely at the helm!

In revisiting where God has been with us over these past few years, we would like to share with you, a sample of the many graces we have received, both personally and communally, throughout this Paschal journey of transformation...a journey, in looking back, that seems to have been somewhat preparatory as our region continue to move closer toward apostolic action connected to our statement of Atlantic Regional Common Mission. **Fishers of People** received the following key graces:

- Our commitment was affirmed, both personally and communally, to the CLC way of living out our Christian faith, yet, at the same time, we became more deeply aware that not everyone is called to this vocation and it takes a few years of formation and breaking in before a temporary commitment can be seriously considered.
- Through this communal LDR experience, F of P was grown by God in areas of deeper trust, spiritual freedom from various detachments in order to be more available for mission, deeper dependency on God alone and learning to patiently await God's lead (definitely a deepening of spiritual maturity).
- The entire experience deepened the bond between the two of us, strengthening our community and better preparing us for future mission.
- God fine tuned our deep listening skills through having only each other's stories from which to get a sense of what the Trinity was speaking into our community. Sometimes we would recognize that we were both receiving the same grace, only within the context of our different lived experience.
- We gained a deeper appreciation of the value and necessity of having a guide to accompany us.
- We were afforded the opportunity to put our CLC tools (DSSE, Power Cycle, LDR) into practice.
- Having to take on more shared responsibility for meetings, leadership roles, etc. provided us with deeper learning experiences, better preparing us for the long haul as committed CLCers.

Presently, our community of two, having experienced this unique Paschal journey, is feeling very resurrected, blessed and held tenderly in the embrace of transforming Love. Today we stand ready to begin a discernment process around a possible call deeply connected to our Atlantic Regional Common Mission statement, after formulating the open question as indicated within the evaluation stage of the Power Cycle. As we consider this new leaning toward apostolic mission, it is safe to say that we, **Fishers of People CLC**, actively await God's lead in an Advent attitude of gratitude and hope, as God's future plans for us continue to unfold.

Submitted by Fishers of People CLC, N.B.

# THE FACE OF TRANSFORMATION

"I solemnly assure you,  
unless the grain of wheat  
falls to the earth and dies,  
it remains just a grain of wheat.  
But if it dies, it produces much fruit."

John 12:24

*In darkness of the earth, we have been planted:  
Just two small seeds of promise, yet to sprout,  
Awaiting gentle hands of germination  
To nurture what this dying is about!*

*We yearn to see the path of future mission,  
To break through moistened soil and rise again,  
To leave cracked coatings far beneath the surface  
And feel life's future purpose usher in!*

*Yet, a Sabbath time awaits this Paschal seeding,  
A time to be embraced by Love's intent;  
A season to be stilled, allowing Mystery  
To shape the heart and mind on being sent!*

*Two restless spirits grope within this darkness!  
Receiving seeds seem left in disarray!  
Yet, heartfelt hope still lingers in their centre:  
That darkest night will splinter into day!*

*And once the Risen Son releases power,  
His Pentecost of purpose shall unfold,  
For CLC shall harvest what's been planted—  
And the Greater Glory of God... it shall behold!*

From the heart, AMDG  
Sandy Mudge  
May 19, 2014 (Morning Prayer)



This poem surfaced during a personal prayer period dedicated to dealing with the early stages of this unexpected exodus from Fishers of People. In looking back, it seems so very prophetic... actually tracing out the Paschal journey that lay before us and revealing God's Presence and Purpose throughout its entire LDR Cycle...perhaps with the final stanza yet to be revealed???

Sandy

## 1<sup>ST</sup> WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

Members of **Our Lady's Circle** with our Group Guide, Graydon and his wife Beth, hosted the first inter-faith *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation* at Sts. Simon and Jude Parish in Nackawic, NB on September 1, 2015. The inter-faith service was attended by 49 people from various churches in the area. It was a historic event with the opening hymn "*Sing to the Mountains*". Pat Lawson welcomed all with a warm greeting and the opening prayer in praise of creation, *Canticle of the Sun by St. Francis of Assisi* was read by Beth Nicholas. Deborah Albert proclaimed our creation story *Genesis 1.1-2.2*, a story from the heart of our Creator. Karen Reeves led us in response to the Scripture reading with Psalm 104: *Lord, send forth Your Spirit and renew the face of the Earth* followed by Psalm Prayer by Francois Thebeau. "*Almighty ever-living God, who are wonderful in the ordering of all your works, may those you have redeemed understand that there exists nothing more marvelous than the world's creation in the beginning except that, at the end of ages, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. O God, who wonderfully created human nature and still more wonderfully redeemed it, grant us, we pray, to set our minds against the enticements of sin so as to be good stewards of all you have created.*"



Graydon Nicholas shared his reflection on creation reminding us that all God creates is beautiful and invited us to imagine every morning holding a baby for 15 minutes and absorb how the baby looks at you

and all that is new in absolute wonder. We must be like a child and look at the world daily in such wonder!

Graydon then led us in the *Prayer to the Four Directions* by Chief Seattle . During the prayer, each of the four directions were represented by a candle held up by CLCers facing East (red), North (white), West (black) and South(yellow).

Intercessory Prayer of the Faithful was led by Pat Lawson followed by the great communal prayer, *Our Father*.

The closing hymn was *MAGNIFICAT* (Lk 1.46-55) sung to the tune of Amazing Grace with voices rising to the rafters and the closing *Prayer to the Holy Spirit* was led Sandy Wright. Thank you and dismissal was beautifully given by Deborah Albert.

Those who attended and participated felt honored at being part of such a wonderful, prayerful service and very much in communion with God, each other and all of creation!

Our Lady's Circle CLC, N.B.

### *Prayer to the Holy Spirit*

*O Holy Spirit, you hovered over the deep at the dawn of creation.*

*You fashioned time and space itself in the initial magnificent flaring forth.*

*You breathed life into all beings and you continue to dwell and work in all creation to sustain that life.*

*Be with us now at this critical moment of our history.*

*Open our ears to the cry of the earth, suffering the effects of human exploitation and unbridled consumption.*

*Open our ears to the cries of our brothers and sisters living in the midst of extreme poverty and hunger.*

*Give us a deeper awareness that we are part of all that you have made, that we are intimately connected to all that has been, all that is and all that will be.*

*Grant us a spirit of awe and wonder as we contemplate the marvels of your creation, recognizing and giving thanks for your presence within and around us.*

*Give us a deep respect for all life and help us to renew our commitment to foster life wherever we are.*

*Give us the courage to denounce all that disfigures your creation and to commit fully to caring for our earthly home and for all the created beings we share it with.*

*May we live lives characterized by compassion and service and may we embody your love in our relationships with one another and with all Creation. Amen*

Our Lady's Circle Selling Tickets...

For Jesuit Refugee Services

In support of Syrian Refugee Camps



***For All Those Living in Poverty***

Leader: Father of life,  
To all who are hungry

**All: Give daily bread**

Leader: To all who are thirsty

**All: Send fresh water**

Leader: To all who are homeless

**All: Provide shelter**

Leader: And in all who are comfortable

**All: Stir up a compassion that cannot be ignored  
Until there is no more poverty and injustice left to feel uncomfortable about.**

**Amen**

(taken from internet source)













