



President's Message

Margaret Kane, CSJ

The following quote suggests to us, as Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, a dynamic image of what it means to follow and surrender to "the more" in our personal and communal journey together.

*When we walk to the edge of all the
light we have and take that step into
the darkness of the unknown,
we must believe that one of
two things will happen.
There will be something solid
for us to stand on,
or we will be taught how to fly.*

(LCWR, "At the Edge of Tomorrow", June 9/08)

Each of us can recall moments in our life when God gave us solid ground or wings as we embarked on the next step in our "yes." When we revisit our origins and those courageous women who impelled our congregations to risk and respond

to unknown realities we believe anew that the Holy Spirit of Love continually is faithful to us.

At this time in our Federation history we are discerning together if God is inviting us to something new. Even contemplating any change surfaces fears for we are unable to know what will happen or to predict the outcome. Of course we are experts in predicting all possible "worse case scenarios"!

Initially in our search we are not clear and do not have easy answers. Admitting these truths is step one toward our inner peace. By embracing the unknown rather than resisting it, God gifts us with deeper inner peace, the foundation of spiritual freedom that is necessary for spiritual discernment.

In faith and trust we know that we will be led by Love to the response of "the more" in a stance that empowers us to live our CSJ mission with zeal and conviction.



Several of the 32 sisters who attended the very successful May 23-24 Program in Hamilton, to help in the preparation for Congregational Leadership. Check the Federation website for further details and some great photographs (courtesy of Sister Elaine Guidinger). Details will become available of a repeat of this program being considered for April 2009.

From the Desk of the Acting Executive Director Valerie Van Cauwenberghe, csj

Now that I have experienced my weekly commutes to Toronto in winter, spring and summer, I look forward to my train trips through beautiful southern Ontario this fall.

Looking back over the past months there are at least two Federation initiatives of note. The comments from the May, 2008 Leadership Conference which was hosted by the Hamilton congregation indicates that the sessions were very informative and appreciated. Thank you to the presenters as well as to the participants. The feasibility of offering this workshop again in 2009 is under consideration.

Secondly, the informal evaluation undertaken by the Mission Team of the "Joseph pamphlet" reveals that this project was very favourably received. Although very little more than their names is known about the six founding women, the team felt that they should be mentioned in the Image section of the reflection on St. Joseph and our mission as Sisters of St. Jo-

seph. Thanks to each of the team members for her contribution to this endeavour.

As a former teacher I have not as yet lost the habit of regarding this time of year as a "beginning". So the first event of this new year is our annual October Federation Board meeting in Hamilton. **Sister Elizabeth Davis, RSM**, who continues to journey with the Board members, will be our facilitator. We are looking forward to moving ahead with the process to discern if God is inviting us to something new. Our theme for this meeting is "Engaging Wisdom". Please keep this important gathering in your prayers.

Since the long, warm days of summer 2008 are receding faster than we may wish, the thought occurs to me that it seems easier to be grateful when we are able to slow down our normal pace to savour the sights and sounds of new places or revisit familiar sites. When I read the following passage I was able to reflect

on the gift of gratitude and realized it is an important virtue for all seasons.

How rich life is when we are mindful of our abundance and live each day with gratitude. When life overflows with gratitude, it becomes a shining light illuminating all who approach. Sorrows become bearable in this light. Dreams, like mosaics, shine with myriad possibilities.

Having the wisdom to be grateful is itself a gift of God. It enables us to walk unafraid into an unknown future in the sure knowledge that:

- ◆ *We are bathed in God's love.*
- ◆ *God goes before us and at the same time walks with us.*
- ◆ *It is the way itself that is to be treasured.*

(LCWR 2008 - "At the Edge of Tomorrow", July 10)

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS—Goal No. 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- **integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources;**
- **reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction of the rate of loss; reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation;**
- **achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.**

The immensity of what needs to be done can overwhelm the imagination!

In a recent trip to France for the forum to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the refounding of the Congregation in Lyon by Mother St. Jean Fontbonne after the revolution, it became clear that we can never fully know the consequences of our choices. This one woman and her companions made choices to live from their best and deepest

intuitions. They never imagined that some two hundred years later, Sisters of St. Joseph from every continent would gather to draw inspiration and experience the power of connection to them. We sensed their courage in facing the trauma of post-revolution France. We felt our interdependence!

And now we can sense the movement of the Spirit in this millennium goal calling us again to concrete action by altering our personal life choices and global policies in order to give credence to our belief in interdependence.

In July 2008, the Constitutional Assembly in Ecuador added the rights of ecosystems into its constitution. They say, "**Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution. Nature has the right to an integral restoration. The State**

will apply precaution and restriction measures in all activities that can lead to extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems or the permanent alteration of the natural cycles. The introduction of organisms and organic and inorganic material that can alter in a definitive way the national patrimony is prohibited."¹

What is at the heart of our charism is that we awaken to communion, that we recognize our essential union and interdependence with all of life. Since our founding in 1650, we have always been urged by the Spirit to expand the boundaries of our inclusivity and to let go of false separations. Toward what further inclusivity might the spirit of our founding be leading us? How can we as a body urge our government toward far-seeing policy?

¹ *Articles on Rights Entitlement, approved by Ecuador's Constitutional Assembly*

Lyon, France ~ 200th Refoundation Anniversary Forum

(written by Sister Dorothy Ryan from the Peterborough Congregation)

On July 5th, 2008, at the invitation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon, 130 Sisters of St. Joseph from around the world gathered in Lyon, France. These sisters represented the 13,769 Sisters of St. Joseph and 34 Congregations presently working in 57 countries around the world. During the first two days, our story was told ... the historical story of the Sisters of St. Joseph from LePuy to Lyon, from Lyon to India and other international countries, and then from Carondelet to Toronto. These presentations were done in impressive and creative ways including a play masterfully performed by the 10 Sisters of the Canadian Federation. The keynote address, entitled "*Embracing Three Fundamental Forms of Interdependence*", was delivered by **Alfredo Sfeir-Younis**. He stressed the importance of 'walking this life with St. Joseph, a person who played a crucial role in shaping the destiny of humanity'. For him, St. Joseph was more than a carpenter. He was a person 'with a unique ability to see the *totality* (the house) as well as *the parts* (the bedroom, kitchen') at the same time. This allowed St. Joseph to live a value system that included a **surrender** in a spirit of interdependence; **obedience** and opening of the heart to the truth; and **justice** associated with simplicity, material poverty and innocence.

With these words of Alfredo embedded deep in our minds and our hearts, we began the journey to our roots and the life of Mother St. John, the embodiment of this Christian value system. Although bus trouble prevented us from seeing St. Didier, St. Etienne and Monistrol, we were able to walk the same path she walked in Bas en Bassett and Lyon. In Bas en Basset, the Mayor unveiled a plaque renaming the street where Mother St. John and her family had lived. It is now known as "*Rue Soeur Jeanne Fontbonne*". In LePuy, we 'huffed and puffed' up the cobblestones to the Church, the archives and the

famous kitchen preserved as it was when used by the first six Sisters and their eventual companions. We also had the opportunity to tour the International Centre with **Sister Lorraine** from Toronto. The Centre's mission statement incorporates the hopes of all of us:

Embrace the past ... study and deepen our awareness of our history ... ensure the preservation of our 'story' for future generations ... engage those who come to deepen their understanding of our mission and charism in an international setting and with a global focus ... interpret our charism in the light of today's world so that 'all may be one'.

The tour of Lyon presented us with two additional memories from our story. In the Heritage Centre at the Motherhouse, we saw authenticated clothing and furnishings used by Mother St. John as well as numerous original documents and the Canadian Federation display. This was followed by a visit to Mother St. John's grave. As you enter the cemetery, you are overwhelmed by the unfolding history and the size of the monuments on display. Then you come to the simple grave of Mother St. John and you stand in silence with burning love and respect for this unique and wonderful woman. Too soon, the days were over ... the visit to 'holy ground' by fellow 'companions on the journey' had come to an end. In the words of **Sister Janet Gagnon**, Superior General in Lyon:

We have come to the end of these days together ... we will now return to our countries and our congregations and we will share the stories of the moments we have lived together in these six days. Mother St. John Fontbonne is saying to you what we have been singing together all these days:

*"My dear Sisters, 'I see myself in you'."*¹

We left, clutching a packet of seeds as a reminder of what has been sown for these 200 years and the seeds that all

of us must continue to plant, so that 'new life' will grow.

¹ **Kathy Sherman** wrote a special song for the occasion entitled "*I see myself in you*".

CONGREGATIONAL STAFF FEATURE



Originally from Montreal, **Kathleen Robbins** has lived in London for the past 22 years, 19 of which she has been with the Sisters of St. Joseph in London mostly in the capacity of Administrative Assistant to the Congregational Leader and Team. She describes her position as unique and above average in the area of challenging and says, "The scope of my work allows me to express my creativity in a way that no other job could. I love what I do!" The scope of Kathleen's work includes administrative tasks, communications, designing publications, PowerPoint presentations, web site design as well as overseeing a large computer network and providing computer support to Sisters and staff. Kathleen is an Associate of the Sisters of the Church in Burlington and a committed lifelong learner having achieved her B.A. and M.Ed from OISE, U of T all on a part-time basis. Kathleen is married with four grown children and a grandson. She enjoys gardening, her two Shih Tzu dogs, and is presently taking courses leading to a Lay Certificate in Theology at Huron University College.

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**UNITED BY A COMMON STORY
AND CHARISM WE,
SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA
FORM A FEDERATION
WHOSE PURPOSE IS
TO FOCUS AND EMPOWER
ONE ANOTHER
IN THE PASSIONATE LIVING OF
OUR MISSION OF ACTIVE
AND INCLUSIVE LOVE.**



FEDERATION COMMITTEES AT WORK

- ◆ The Executive Contacts joined the Executive Committee for a meeting at the Federation Office on April 2, 2008 and the Executive met again by Conference Call on June 3, 2008. Discussions have included Federation Office operations and ongoing plans for the October 2008 Board.
- ◆ The Federation Office for Systemic Justice Standing Committee met by conference call on May 23, 2008. Discussion included OSJ staff participation in the April 2008 Justice & Peace Gathering in Lyon, France and the appointment of Associate/Companion representation to the Standing Committee. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for October 21-22, 2008 in Toronto.
- ◆ The Associates/Companions Leaders Committee continue with plans for the Conference to be held September 19-21, 2008.
- ◆ The Ecology Committee members are very pleased to report on the success of "Walking Sacred Earth", a well-received retreat sponsored by the Federation, which took place June 10-17, 2008 at Invermara.
- ◆ The Vocation Committee members plan to meet in Toronto on September 10-11, 2008
- ◆ The ad hoc Archives Task Force continues to move forward smoothly, with two congregations having completed their research and data entry and the rest well on the way to completion. A clear picture is anticipated by year-end on how the information will be produced.

Notes of Interest & Kudos

Congratulations to -

Sister Anne Anderson (Ham) on her appointment as Interim President of the University of St. Michael's College, effective July 1, 2008 for a maximum term of 18 months. Sister Anne will remain as Dean of the Faculty of Theology during this time, as well as continuing to serve as a member of the General Council of her congregation. A busy lady indeed!

and to -

Sister Joyce Murray (Pet) on her appointment as English Secretary of the UISG Secretariat in Rome. The position will involve translation/facilitation/communications with the English-speaking congregations of the 1,900 member Union worldwide. Joyce may also be working with one or two commissions such as Justice and Peace.