



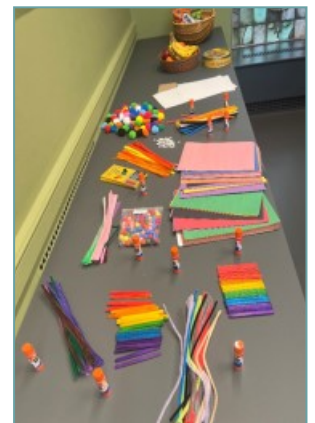
**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE –
Mary Jo Radey, CSJ**

I went to New York to do arts and Crafts! What?!! The Canadian Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph were the invited guests of the U.S. Federation meeting of their Leadership Assembly on November 8th to 10th in Queens, New York at Thomas Berry Place. Carole Umana, Sheila Fortune (In Canada) and I met at Air Canada, Terminal 1, Gate F, joined by our very own, Mary Rowell (In Canada) who was facilitating the gathering for our American cousins. The guest presenters for the Assembly were two of the “newer/younger” members of the CSSJ family, Sally Koch (Carondelet) and Sarah Simmons (Cong. of St. Joseph), and their topic was, “The call of religious life in the 21st century. Moving through listening to action”. They had the Leaders of the U.S. CSSJ Congregations (and a few wayward Canadians) consider what they valued in community living and to hear the experience of newer/younger members. Then, they had us create HOPE.

Each person was to choose one magazine picture and five arts and crafts items...and return to their table groups. Choosing among paper and popsicle sticks, pompoms and pipe cleaners, glue and googly eyes we were to combine our resources to construct something that represented “hope.” The discussions were fascinating (after the eye rolling finished...) as these women who are used to bricks and mortar decisions, financial crises, life

enrichment choices and nursing care for thousands of religious Sisters across the United States and beyond began gluing and ripping paper, bending pipe cleaners and connecting pompoms all to construct “something” that spoke of hope. Some were works of art; others were described with deep theology and CSJ principles of spirituality. Our table was somewhat more whimsical with a monkey face in the middle, and two pompom figures on the edge looking outward with their googly eyes... (a more fulsome explanation would require us to share a glass of wine together...!!)

My reflection on the graces of this experience landed on the gift of “federation.” This gathering of very busy women was ostensibly to make decisions about assets and governance and mission, but by inviting of Sally and Sarah into their midst, a new “construction” entered the conversation.



Federation became the structure to build relationship in a new way, beyond the “silos” of old, where congregations could stand quite comfortably on their own. This is a time and place where Federation calls forth networking and collaborating, socializing and cooperating,

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Continued

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teamwork and laughter. Federation is a way to build bridges and help to see community from new perspectives.

All of us reading this newsletter are in the Family of Joseph, and are aware of the horrors of the world, of the pain in our families, and the suffering even in our Congregations. A recent retreat experience recalled the

lyrics to Dan Schutte's "City of God." May this Advent time be a time for us to gather our "arts and crafts" into a construction of HOPE, so that our "tears be turned into dancing" for the "Lord of all kindness has called us to be a Light for His people to set their hearts free." Hope is ours to create...and sometimes, it has googly eyes! May the Blessings of Advent be ours!!



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Carole Umana

"Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right." - Psalm 106:3

Over the past few months, as our newsfeeds have surged with stories of trauma and chaos, it is easy to feel overwhelmed... indeed, even numb. Yet, as my path increasingly crosses with Sisters of St. Joseph from throughout North America and internationally, I am continually reminded of the importance of *seeing, loving and serving our 'dear neighbour'* -- from every-day expressions of care to large-scale acts of defiance against injustice. Indeed, these distinct and yet interrelated expressions of love are increasingly needed in today's world.

Each week, through the Global Coordinating Group country prayers, we read about the life-sustaining efforts of Sisters and Associates throughout the world – oftentimes working in the most troubled and dangerous contexts. Serving in healthcare, education, social services and community development, we learn how their presence brings hope to many people who would otherwise exist in dire circumstances.

In this Advent issue of the Federation newsletter, you will read about several ways that our Canadian Sisters and Associates/Companions are also demonstrating

beautiful expressions of care and love of mission. For example, through the London Indigenous Teaching & Sharing Circles - which amplifies the voices of Indigenous women who share their experiences and truths – new and strong bonds of understanding and support are being forged with those inspired to work for justice. Similarly, and in the spirit of unifying love, our Sault Ste. Marie Associates provide an update of their ministry at the local St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen. And, the Associate members of the Blue Community Steering Committee share how they recently participated in a Sudbury watershed clean-up day as an act of environmental justice.

In addition to the efforts undertaken at these local levels and described in this newsletter, it is also important to acknowledge the vital role that our UN/NGO plays in bringing the issues and consequences of injustice to global leaders and decision-makers. By providing an information channel, mobilizing and building understanding within the United Nations and its agencies, and helping to monitor and promote policies in support of UN goals and resolutions, the efforts of our UN/NGO are vital to strengthening our collective desire for a more just and equitable global community.

Through all of these and many other local and global efforts, Sisters and partners are 'building Justice'

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through daily kindnesses and larger acts aimed at fostering long-term and systemic change.

Indeed, while the newsfeeds can be bleak, the message of love and hope is even stronger. Thus, at this special

time of year, let our hearts be filled with peace, love, joy and hope as we remember our dear neighbour and the many who work for social justice... for 'they are blessed.'

CSJ BLUE COMMUNITY - The Effects of Wildfires on Freshwater Systems

By all accounts, 2023 was a devastating year for wildfires in Canada – with Ontario reporting triple the number of fires compared to 2022. When we think about forest fires, the effect on our fresh water systems is perhaps not top-of-mind. However, with the increase in fire frequency and intensity, environmentalists are sounding the alarm about the affects that wildfires have on our rivers, lakes and ground water systems.

Instead of thinking about water as simply a hydrogen and oxygen mix, let's instead consider that fresh water systems are complex and made up of all of the components with which they come into contact – such as the environment, pollution, and human activity. As such, the symbiotic relationship between water and its surrounding environments has a direct effect on the health of fresh water systems.

The organization Global Forest Watch describes three basic types of forest fires: 'ground' (often in decayed roots below-ground that can remain undetected and active), 'surface' (burned by flaming combustion) and 'crown' which burns the forest canopy. Given that forests have a natural water filtration and storage system within the soil, severe wildfires such as those we are now experiencing can result in a burned hard-packed top-soil unable to absorb rainfall. Thus, while the cycle of wildfires is natural within some forest ecosystems, today's fires are particularly devastating given that woodlands require ten years on average to regenerate. Simply stated, reoccurring fires prevent healthy forest regeneration and can leave vast areas vulnerable to

invasive species and/or desertification.

Clearly, forests play a critical role in the water cycle. In fact, they "are key drivers in how much water is available, at what time it's available, and of what quality it's going to be ... by providing a natural capture and filtration process that is directly connected to all of our water supplies, whether it be surface water or groundwater."¹ The effects of severe fires on our fresh water systems include: the amount and timing of snowmelt; runoff from storms and the inability to absorb rain-water; water quality issues as a result of ash buildup, soil erosion and fire debris; added phosphate and nitrate in forest soils treated with fire retardant chemicals; released carbon; challenges to local water treatment systems and their ability to ensure safe drinking water; and, the devastating loss of interconnected flora and fauna that together foster healthy forests and water systems.

Sadly, the Ontario government's Forest Fire Management website does not appear to value the interdependence between freshwater

systems and forests, and instead limits the risks posed by wildfires to "communities, property, timber supply and infrastructure"² while at the same time cutting the forest firefighting budget by 67 percent.³



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CSJ BLUE COMMUNITY Continued

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What does this all mean? Many believe that key to preserving our forests, fresh water systems and, indeed, our planet is through 'local action.'

The Sisters of St. Joseph have always understood that vital connection between local action and global impact. By becoming a Blue Community (in 2017), working on various ecological initiatives, and ensuring that water conservation is an integral consideration in facilities and buildings, congregations actively support access to fresh water as a human and sacred right. At the same time, by working with local water-rights groups - like during the recent Junction Creek watershed clean-up day (see box) - Sisters are building strong community partnerships and supporting concrete action.

As our wildfire season continues to get longer and more

intense, we must look beyond the burning forests and blackened skies – to consider the interconnectedness of our forests and watersheds. As noted by Dr. Monica Emelko (Canada's Research Chair in Water Science): "Wildfire impacts water. Freshwater sources are impacted directly and indirectly by wildfires, which in turn impact human health. Water is essential for life, so when water availability and quality are affected, so is the health of communities and ecosystems."⁴

Indeed, the importance of recognizing the complex inter-dependence between fresh water systems and wildfires is vital if we are to foster a sustainable future for all.

1. [Climate Atlas of Canada](#)
2. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/forest-fire-management>
3. Jun 9, 2023 [Orillia Matters e-news](#)
4. June 24, 2023 [CBC](#)

A COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP OF THE JUNCTION CREEK

Bonnie Chesser, CSJ

In May of 2021, Tasha Beeds, an Indigenous woman who was a professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury, was preparing to lead a Sacred Water Walk along Junction Creek which runs from Garson, just east of Sudbury to Spanish, Ontario, approximately 110 km. It empties into the north channel of Lake Huron. Prior to this she had invited us to a webinar in which she shared her shock as a newcomer to Sudbury of walking along Junction Creek and seeing all the garbage in it. She said, "**For indigenous people, water is sacred. It is where we go to pray. I would never go into any church or synagogue and through garbage in their sanctuary**".

This inspired her to invite others to join in a three-day walk, with women taking turns carrying the copper pot of water and a male walking beside her, on the outside as protection, carrying the eagle feather. Four of us from the Blue Community accompanied them for one day,

along with the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee. For us it was significant to have them reclaim the sacredness of water in this way.

Recognizing water as sacred and wanting to honor Indigenous women as "Water Protectors," our Blue Community

Committee decided to engage local people in an action flowing from Laudato Si's "Season of Creation." So, we contacted most of our Catholic parishes in Sudbury, along with our three Catholic high schools and invited them to join us in a clean-up. Although we had 78 people registered, it was



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A COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP OF THE JUNCTION CREEK - Continued

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a cold, breezy day and 30 people attended. Students used this for their community service hours. Sixty bags of garbage (418.5 kg.) were collected, along with 12 shopping carts in working condition which were returned to their stores. This was one way in which we contributed to reclaiming this place of prayer for Indigenous people. Tim Horton's and Topper's Pizza donated nourishment for the workers.

On Saturday, October 21st, the Sudbury-based Junction Creek Stewardship Committee – whose mandate is to lead efforts to improve and maintain a healthy Junction Creek watershed – organized a clean-up day followed by a volunteer appreciation. Together with local Sudbury volunteers and youth, CSJ Associates (and Blue Community Steering Committee members) Ruth-Anne Ingram, Judy Bowes and Rita Pulice were present at this important community effort which collected many bags of litter from the shores of the creek. Last year, the CSJ Blue Community supported the efforts of the Junction Creek Committee with a donation towards their important community work to protect water.



FEDERATION OFFICE FOR SYSTEMIC JUSTICE - Looking Deeper Sue Wilson, CSJ

Taken together, the seasons of Advent and Christmas highlight a spiritual tension, insisting that the divine is intimately present in our lives even though, at times, we sense only absence and yearning. This tension can draw us to look deeper at life; to see that “that which is most sacred” intermingles, often unnoticed, with even the most disturbing aspects of life.

What might this look like?

Just watching the news these days can be overwhelming. We are bombarded with images of war, senseless acts of violence, families facing financial struggles, people struggling to survive on the streets, rivers choked

by pollution, forests stripped of biodiversity, and communities devastated by the impacts of climate change.

For people of faith, it begs the question: What is Love doing here?

We yearn for signs of hope, hints of new life, possibilities for transformation.

Consider this:

- While so many fall into polarized thinking about the violence in Israel and Gaza, there are Israelis,

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Gazans, and many others who refuse such simplistic thinking and, in so doing, can pull others to a higher consciousness; to a level of consciousness that is able to hold the fullness of reality and be the source of real change. These are sacred energies to which the world is urging us to be attentive.

- The Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, began his fight against rising inflation by advising workers not to ask for too much in wage gains, even though real wages have been falling and workers' share of GDP has shrunk. It was putting the pain of fighting inflation squarely on the backs of workers. More recently, the Bank of Canada seems to be paying attention to those economists who have argued that, during this inflationary period, it is corporate profits that have surged to record levels, not wages. In a recent speech, Macklem acknowledge corporate profit-making as a concern. It's an example of how dialogue in the public square, when done well, with reasonableness and respect, can be a space for transformation. To this point, Finance Minister Freeland recently called for more competition in the



grocery sector.

- With climate change, the shifts the world needs are often slow and tentative. But, in a public space with such deep resistance to change, each small step achieved by climate diplomacy might be understood as grace. For instance, last year, the annual United

Nations climate talks ended with a landmark agreement for wealthy countries compensate countries in the Global South for destruction from climate disasters. But this Loss and Damage fund lacked detail, including which countries and financial institutions would contribute. More recently, key details have been negotiated and

global leaders will be asked to ratify the plan at COP 28. This marks a pivotal point in the struggle to get rich countries to compensate poorer countries for recovery and rebuild. The amount of the fund won't be anywhere near enough, but it is one more small step into global solidarity.

Together, Advent and Christmas call us to seek God's transforming presence among us. Where are some of the places you see possibilities for hope, new life, and transformation? How can you contribute to the change?

GREEN WINDOW - Putting a Face onto Global Suffering **Janet Speth, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee**



We are all despairing of the news we are witnessing of the Hamas- Israeli conflict and we know it is the tip of the iceberg of the suffering the world over. One response is to protect ourselves, to minimize our feelings of helplessness with an attitude of detachment - it is happening over there, it does not affect me. Yet Pope Francis reminds us that, "Our goal ...is to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our

own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it. (LS #19)

How do we put a face onto suffering?

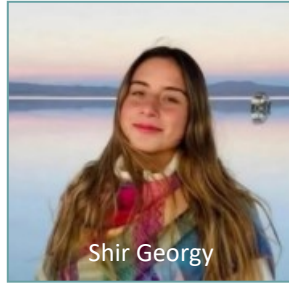
I found myself following the experience of one Canadian – a 22-year-old Israeli woman from the music festival

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massacre Oct. 7, 2023.

Shir Georgy at first was missing and then the announcement came that she had been murdered. I felt so devastated for her and her family. I can only image the terror she and the other young people must have felt. Such a loss of a beautiful and promising life.



What is rarely reported, and often never, is the devastation to the environment in these war-torn areas around the globe - the loss of biodiversity of life on the land, in the air and in the waters.

How do we personalize this suffering and allow ourselves to grieve for our planet home?

Let us consider the oldest olive tree in the world, the Mother Tree, that grows in Palestine, in the small village of Al-Walajeh. She is estimated to possibly be 5,000 years old She rises 13 meters into the sky. She has a girth of 25 meters and her shade spreads over 250 square meters, enough to accommodate a crowd of several hundred people. From her root system she supports 22 other smaller trunks.

Throughout her history, she has witnessed the glory and the anguish of countless invasions. The



question is will she survive the traumas of these current years of political turmoil? Already her yield has significantly reduced from her former annual half ton of olive oil to at times now only 250 kilograms of oil and sometimes none.

How can we lament with her?

There are very simple and yet profound ways we can personalize Mother Earth and her suffering in these times. As we turn on the water for our morning coffee

or for brushing our teeth let us think of the Mother Tree for whom water is so important and is being sorely impacted by the conflicts. Let us remember, for a moment, all the other-than-human life dependent on clean water in so many other war-torn areas around the globe.

Let us pray: May we always be grateful to Sister Water for her many blessings!

As we make our olive oil and vinegar salad dressing, let us bring to mind the wanton destruction of olive trees by the thousands in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict destroying all the life forms, that are dependent on them. Perhaps, we can purchase Zartoun, the fair-trade olive oil from Palestine and allow it to connect us with the land that Mother Tree has protected for eons of time. Let our hearts be broken as we acknowledge that the web of life is being torn asunder.



We pray: May our hearts be mended with hope for peace!

And as we nurture our own garden and house plants let us remember with gratitude Salah Abu Ali who daily cares for the Mother Tree lovingly watering her and protecting her. Let us bring to mind all those who care for and advocate for the sustainability of all life.

We pray: May they be strengthened and energized in their commitment to justice!

As we pray for both Shir's family and for the survival of Mother Tree let us ponder the words of Pope Francis, "I call on all believers to take only one side in this [and any] conflict — that of peace, not with words but with prayer." ¹ Let us believe that, "Truly much can be done" (LS # 180).

Photos: from related articles posted on Google

<https://www.voanews.com/a/pope-francis-calls-for-end-to-israel-palestinian-violence/7316162.html>

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Peace and Chocolate **Mary Rowell, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee**

Usually, this contribution to the Federation Newsletter from the Ecology Committee addresses, in a direct way, issues around food security. Some recent visits to Antigonish, Nova Scotia, however, reminded me of an initiative through which food, in this case chocolate, is connected intentionally with global peace.

Driving through lovely Antigonish I spotted the premises of “Peace by Chocolate,” a thriving business that was the dream of the Hadhad family who emigrated to Canada as refugees from Syria in 2016. Tareq Hadhad, the eldest son of the family tells the story in this way, “When we came to Canada a few years ago, we had a dream and mission: A dream to rebuild our lives and a mission to share our story of hope and resilience. Today, “Peace by Chocolate” is run by Tareq, his father, Isam and his mother, Shahnaz. Other family members are also engaged in the company. The Hadhad family of chocolatiers had previously run a thriving business in Damascus for over 30 years. In November of 2012 their business was bombed leaving them destitute. They fled to Lebanon for safety and spent 3 years there until they were able to come to Canada and to a warm Nova Scotia welcome.

Beginning in their home kitchen in Antigonish they began rebuilding their lives piece by piece or as Tareq would say, “Peace by Peace”. Today their expanding business is highly successful producing artisan chocolate and employing numerous people in cities across Canada and in the United States.

What is truly significant in this story is the contribution by the Hadhad family of a percentage of all their profits to the “Peace on Earth Society.” The charitable organization was begun in Nova Scotia by the Hadhad family in 2018. It supports peace building initiatives around the world. As Tareq says, “peace is the noblest value on Earth,” a value which all people

should embrace. How true his words are as we look around the world at present with all its turmoil, wars and violence.



The Hadhad story is remarkable, highlighting the importance of peacebuilding initiatives. It also echoes a wider narrative about the relationship between violence and food insecurity. The Stockholm Peace Research Institute reports that “Global food Insecurity is driven

primarily by violent conflict, climate change, the ripple effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living.” Food insecurity and its consequences, the Institute points out, are most prominent in countries where conflict exists and those affected by human and natural disasters. “Therefore, food security is a critical issue for peace and security. The food crisis requires a response that is simultaneously humanitarian, pro-development and peace oriented.”

Such a response is illustrated by the commitment, born of their own sufferings, of the Hadhad family as they work to help build peace through their support of practical projects across the world; projects that address ways to create an environment and climate for peace. Food for peace! Chocolate for peace! They provide an example for us and they invite us to find our own ways to work for peace and security including food security, locally and globally.

So, the next time we are looking for that “sweet” gift for someone perhaps it will be a gift of “Peace - by Chocolate”! Having tasted it I can guarantee its “deliciousness” and delicious too is freedom from hunger, conflict and loss for the millions who suffer in the world today.

(Peace by Chocolate can be ordered on line, through various specialist shops, Ten Thousand Villages outlets and is often available at Sobeys stores)



VOCATION ALIVE - Partners in Mission

Julie Cachia on behalf of the Vocation-Animation Committee

The *Mission Alive!* program facilitated by Sr. Dolores Clerico, SSJ, Philadelphia in Le Puy, France in September invited us on a journey of the heart into the history, mission and spiritual traditions of the Sisters of St. Joseph. We were encouraged to consider ourselves pilgrims open to exploring how this experience would stir our hearts and how God was calling us. My curiosity was learning how mission would more deeply inform my vocation ministry.

Sr. Dolores shared that a charism for any religious congregation is needed to live out its mission. I learnt that for a Sister of St. Joseph who has been called to live within the giftedness of this charism or Associates living within that same spirit, it is a profound experience, a deep desire drawing one wholeheartedly to embrace the CSJ mission of union love - loving and serving God and the dear neighbour. It is a mission that fosters an inherent unity that already exists within the heart of all creation; an inherent union which is God's design for all creation. As Thomas Merton, OCSO writes, "We are already one. But we imagine we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we already are."

As our group walked through the streets of Le Puy reflecting and praying at certain points of historical interest, I appreciated more profoundly how the ordinary work of these first six women was provided with extraordinary care. Their actions demonstrated that their mission of unifying love was an active, practical and real love. These women lived their call by tending to the sick, dying and orphaned. Through their actions, others came to know and experience God's unconditional love in simple and yet creative, courageous ways.

For centuries, the Sisters of St. Joseph have been widening their tent by living, inviting and sharing this dream of loving unity through their ministries of care, compassion and social justice. By their example, we are invited to make this mission our life's journey. We are called to be present to and bring this unifying love into the messiness, sufferings, and joys of everyday living. Author Kathleen Cahalan wrote beautifully that vocation is a relationship between our lives and God's purpose.



I am called
by God,
to follow,
as I am,
from grief,
for service,
in suffering,
through others,
within God.

We are called by God, to follow Jesus' mission of service for others sharing who we are and knowing that we are held in God's embracing love.

As our time in Le Puy came to end, what spoke to me was that vocation ministry with the Sisters of St. Joseph is about being a lay partner in mission – doing and being my best from where I am in this time bringing the CSJ mission alive! In fact, being a lay partner in mission is an invitation open to everyone. Every day, we are invited to participate with the Sisters in this dance of unioning love with Divine Love as our partner. How exciting, hope-filled and much needed for our future is this mission of unity where all shall be one!



DEEP THOUGHTS ON OUR JOURNEY TO LE PUY **- Reflecting on Mission Alive!**

Between September 2-9th, 16 Sisters of St. Joseph staff -- from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, the United States and Uruguay -- participated in the Mission Alive program offered by Sr. Dolores Clérico (Philadelphia) at the International Centre in Le Puy (France). The program was developed for laypeople (including staff, administrators and board members) associated with one of the ministries founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph in order to provide an immersion experience into the original spirit and global dimension of the charism and spiritual tradition. Below are reflections from our four Canadian CSJ staff who attended Mission Alive.



(Image L-R): Sarah Brenner, Michelle Vermeeren, Sabrina Chiefari, and Julie Cachia at Mother St. John Fontbonne's statue in Lyon.

Sarah Brenner (Senior Accountant, In Canada Congregation)

Mission Alive – Connection, Relationship and Union!

I feel truly blessed to have been chosen to attend this program. What a fantastic experience and one which I know will stay with me.

From the daily lessons, time for reflection, the connection with new-found friends; to the soul of the Sisters and their work through learning their history and also by visiting the historic landmarks.

I was grateful for the opportunity to share the same common purpose with others and to begin a journey of wholeness. To be told that we are a part of the heart of the story and not an addendum was inspirational and to truly understand that the journey of unity begins in our own hearts.

“Compassion is contagious. Every moment we

choose compassion, we move toward a better world.” - Amit Ray. Thank you.

Julie Cachia (Vocation Animator, Toronto Congregation)

Many moments were memorable for me from the Missions Alive! Program in Le Puy. What resonated with me more deeply was that the focus of the CSJ mission of unifying love is ultimately about being in relationship. How we choose to relate to our loving God and to each other is what invites a moment, a movement, a change to living in a union of love. If each of us together does our best to love God with all our heart, soul and mind and our dear neighbour; then our small piece of being and work/ministry can make a difference.

But this mission of unifying love is no easy task. When we truly reflect on the invitation to love our God and dear neighbour without distinction that is a big ask! So, it is in those moments that I am reminded that being in relationship with others and with God has its ups and downs throughout my life journey. I am continually gently nudged, encouraged and reminded that God first loved me and each of us. No one is excluded from God's inclusive love! We are, therefore, called continually to grow in who we were created to be so as to love and be loved striving to bring a mission of unifying love into this broken world.

Sabrina Chiefari (Creation Care Animator, Toronto Congregation)

Julie and I realized almost immediately, as lay staff engaged with public outreach and “animation”, that we had next to nothing professionally in common with our fellow retreatants (who were either finance professionals, healthcare or school administrators, or teachers) upon first meeting at the Centre International St. Joseph. With the focus of my work being care for creation, I felt even further set-apart in the group, suddenly jarred by the reality of just how complicated achieving “oneness” really is.

At the beginning of each session with Sr. Dolores, I'd wonder how care for creation would be applied to this

DEEP THOUGHTS ON OUR JOURNEY TO LE PUY - Continued

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immersion into the founding of the Congregation and, invariably, by the end of the same session marvelling at how creation care underpinned so much of what we were invited to reflect on.

I'm certain every participant, in any language and with unending gratitude, will say something to the effect of *"the Mission Alive! experience in September was profoundly meaningful on both personal and professional levels."* But what stands out to me is how much more profound the experience was given how different the group was, beyond job descriptions. And yet, for 1 week, we were all **one**.

Michelle Vermeeren (Administrator, in Canada Congregation – London Residence)

When I was asked about what I hoped to gain from this experience of Mission Alive, I answered with hopes of learning about the history of the Sisters, walking in their footsteps and then receiving ideas



about how I would share my knowledge with the staff back home. Upon reflection, I know that this was an exercise for the head.

What I learned as the week unfolded is that my time in Le Puy and Lyon became an exercise of the heart, learning what was moving within me as a partner of the Sisters of St. Joseph. I was surrounded with like-minded lay people, and while the language barriers were challenging, those individuals from Brazil, Argentina, Toronto and Uruguay

spoke passionately about the work they engage in, and their eyes were flashing with the charisma of the Sisters. What I quickly realized is that each person there was rooted in the same story of those women in that kitchen in Le Puy. That spirit, or breath of God, was in each of us, and had spread within us, calling us to bring that spirit into the work we were all doing back home. I certainly feel that the Sisters require **my** talents, **my** life experience, and **my** heart to go forward, **that all may be one**. I am a piece of the puzzle.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS - Final in the Series Featuring Federation Foundresses From the Federation Archives and Heritage Committee



This coming January, as the last in the series of Historical Highlights featuring the six Federation Foundress, the Archives & Heritage Committee today shares the story of Sister St. Thomas, later known as Sr. Mary – who was born in Douglas Ontario on

St. Joseph's Day 1905 and took her final vows in March 1930. Sr. Mary taught for 19 years in

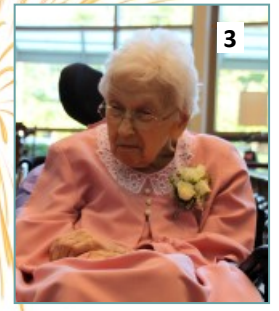
Chapeau, Douglas, Calabogie and Renfrew until being appointed Mistress of Novices in 1946. In 1957, Sister was elected General Superior of the Pembroke Congregation and during her 12 years in that role welcomed renewal and adaptation which came through Vatican II. A founding member of the Federation, Mother Mary was granted the Proecclesia Et Pontifice medal by Pope John Paul II for outstanding service to Church and state in 1986.

Read more about Mother Mary on the [Federation website](#) (under Latest from the Federation) on January 15.

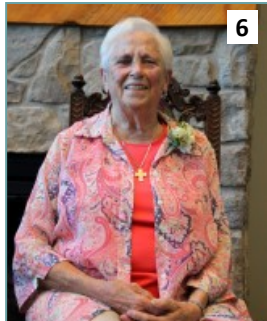
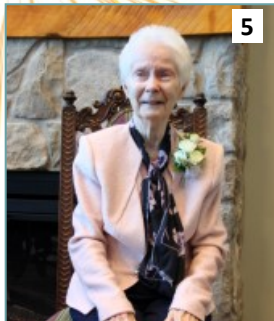
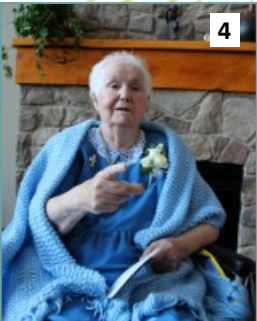
Happy Jubilee to: LONDON AND SAULT STE. MARIE SISTERS

This autumn, two joyous events took place. On Saturday, September 23rd, the In Canada Congregation celebrated its London Jubilarians at their Windermere Residence and on Sunday, October 8th, the Sault Ste. Marie Jubilarians were honoured at their North Bay Motherhouse.

These jubilant celebrations brought Sisters together to share memories, reflect on their loving commitment to religious life, and enjoy a special day of prayer, song and togetherness. Many congratulations to our special Jubilarians!



Images: (1) Chapel Celebration in London; (2) London Jubilee meal; (3) Sr. Emerita Godal (80th Jubilee); (4) Sr. Hilda Maloney (75th Jubilee); (5) Sr. Marcelline Janisse (70th Jubilee); (6) Sr. Mary James Finucan (75th Jubilee); (7) Sault Ste. Marie Jubilarians – Sisters Bonnie MacLellan (50th Jubilee), Glenna Hassett (75th Jubilee) and Mary Anne Arsenault (70th Jubilee); (8) Sr. Linda Maclsaac (SSM) celebrating her 60th Jubilee.



2024 International Centre Programs in Le Puy - You are invited!

Attending a program at the International Centre is a life-changing experience! In addition to meeting fellow participants from throughout the world, you can visit key historical and spiritual sites as well as profoundly learn about the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Details about the 2024 programs listed below are now available on the [International Centre website](#):

Stepping into the Past, Living in the Present, Journeying toward the Future. **May 27-June 3** presented by Sr. Mary Rowell.

Charism in Motion. **June 6-13** presented by Sr. Michelle Leshner and Kristen Whitney Daniels.

The Lace Is Not Yet Finished. **September 8-14** presented by Sr. Jane DeLisle

Mission Alive! **September 28-October 5** presented by Sr. Dolores Clérico.

TAKE THIS AND EAT...

Irma di Renzo, on behalf of the Sault Ste. Marie Associates' Group



"In gentleness, peace, and joy, we celebrate God's life within us and amongst us and we offer our dear neighbours our small gift hospitality, food, and respect." Shirley Kindred (SSM Associate)

In a journal entry written over 35 years ago, Henri Nouwen reflects on a sea of "hungry eyes" staring at him as he presides over Mass: "I saw the immense suffering of humanity" in the faces of the congregants – "people dying from starvation and epidemics; people driven from their homes; people sleeping on the streets ...people craving a gentle word."¹ As he offers consecrated bread to the hungry assembled, he is suddenly overtaken by the concreteness of Jesus' lasting example of unity, love, and caretaking this and eat of it.

For twenty years, sharing nourishment with the dear neighbour at St. Vincent Place has been a way that the Sault Ste. Marie Associates have come together in response to the increasing hunger and distress visible on their city's streets.

St. Vincent Place, located in the city's downtown core, is an outreach agency of the Society of



St. Vincent de Paul—whose mandate of benevolence and charity towards those less fortunate is well known throughout the world. Its Soup Kitchen relies on the work of volunteers who are responsible for planning,

purchasing, preparing, serving, and cleaning up after a meal when it's their turn. The "CSJ Associates" is one of 18 teams who rotate the responsibility of serving dinner on Wednesdays and lunch on Saturdays throughout the year. Roughly, this translates into 4 meals a year; feeding upwards of 150 people per meal. To defray the cost of the meals

some teams fundraise or are sponsored by their employers; our team takes up a collection at the beginning and midway through the year.

These quarterly gatherings, in the visibly broken heart of our city, are humbling and transformational for all of our sister and brother Associates who choose to participate either as team members, in prayerful support, or through donations of food and baking.

It's a place energized by hope, where distinctions of 'otherness' are dissolved, and where somehow, there's always more than enough to give away.

Image: Sault Ste. Marie Associates and Sisters)

1. Henri JM Nouwen, "The Road to Daybreak" (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 160-161

The Federation Vocation Animation Committee of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada invite you to a

Wednesday

BOOK CLUB

January 10, 17, 24, 31 in 2024
6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. EST

Discussing

Joining the Divine Conversation,
by Anne Jamieson.

Details

In this accessible and down-to-earth book, we delve into eight types of conversations you may be having with God: from times where you feel left out or misunderstood to moments of being on holy ground, and much more in between.

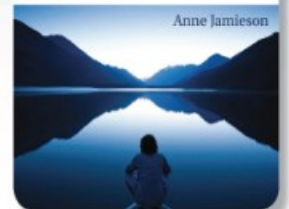
Registration

Visit csj-to.ca/bookclub to sign up.

Joining the Divine Conversation

A Guide to Listening
to the God Who Speaks

Anne Jamieson



Available through Novalis
csj-to.ca/joiningthedivine

FEDERATION OF THE
Sisters of St. Joseph
of Canada

LONDON INDIGENOUS TEACHING & SHARING CIRCLES

Sr. Kathleen Lichti's Ministry of Truth & Reconciliation



March 2020 seems so long ago – when everything was shut down and in-person meetings became impossible. However, that didn't stop Sr. Kathleen Lichti (In Canada). As a long-committed ally, Sr. Kathleen wanted to

ensure that the teachings and togetherness in the London-based Indigenous circle continued. That's how the (online) Indigenous Teaching & Sharing Circles began: first with KAIROS Canada and since January 2022 as the London Indigenous Teaching & Sharing Circles (LITS).

Each online session is led by an Indigenous woman who speaks her experience, knowledge and truth around some of today's most critical issues. Through these online circles, participants both further their understanding as well as deepen their personal commitment to truth and reconciliation. Through an interactive format which includes a teaching and

sharing circle, the LITS program aims to foster positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous through truth-telling, sharing and open dialogue.

Since its inception, hundreds of people from throughout Turtle Island and beyond have participated in sessions – with many joining for multiple topics as they deepen their knowledge and understanding. Pre-registration is required for each session through [Eventbrite](#) at a cost of \$20 (plus tax). For further information about the program, you can also contact 519-537-0611 or litcircles@gmail.com.

Upcoming 2024 Sessions

January 9: *Moving Beyond the "Truths": Can Reconciliation be Achieved?*

Presenter: Tina Stevens

February 13: *What is the Residential School Syndrome?*

Presenter: Tracey Whiteye

March 12: *The Metis People Past, Present and Future.*

Presenter: Gloria Thomson.

April 9: *Living with Systemic Racism as an Indigenous person.* Presenter: Mary-Anne Kechego

Moving with Love toward Reconciliation – these video resources are recommended:

[They Came for the Children](#)

[Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen lands, Strong Hearts](#)

FUNDRAISING CALENDAR



Patricia Ann Dennis loves the Sisters of St. Joseph and, as a Sault Ste. Marie Congregation Associate, is using her creativity as an author to raise funds for the Motherhouse in North Bay. In addition to currently writing a children's book about the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Patricia has also created a special 2024 calendar which tells the story of a chipmunk which lives around the Motherhouse – where she also lives. These special one-time-only Calendars are being offered at a sliding scale (\$10-20) with all proceeds going to the Motherhouse in North Bay. Please contact Jeannine Denis denismj2023@gmail.com for ordering details.

TORONTO ASSOCIATES' ASSEMBLY DAY ON "SYNODALITY"

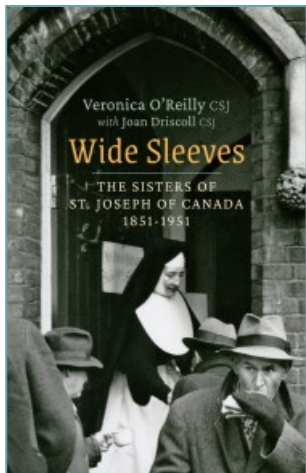
On February 24, the Toronto CSJ Associates will be hosting a Zoom-based Assembly Day with Fr. Tom Rosica, CSB, on the topic "Synodality." Everyone is welcome. Please contact Ellen Popkie ellenpopkie@gmail.com for details.



From the Archives is a new feature in the Federation newsletter. In each issue, the Archives & Heritage Committee will highlight a special artifact held in one of their congregational archives - along with a description and history. In this first contribution, Toronto archivist Linda Wicks shares Mother St. John Fontbonne's rosary.

A personal rosary originally belonging to Mother St. John Fontbonne is one of the most precious artifacts to be cared for by the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto. According to the framed explanation of ownership, Mother St. John gifted these beads to her brother on the evening before she was to have been guillotined in 1793. Her brother, in turn, bequeathed the rosary to his daughter, Marie Antoinette, before she left France for North America as a young Sister of St. Joseph, Sister Mary Delphine Fontbonne. After Mother Delphine's death on 7 February 1856, this precious legacy passed into the possession of Mother Teresa Brennan and Mother Bernard Dinan, successively. Prior to its transfer to the archives, the rosary was in the care of the novice mistress.

***New Publication "Wide Sleeves"
Joe Keast Archivist/Librarian, In Canada (Peterborough)***



In the 1990's Sister Veronica O'Reilly began a major project to tell the story of the first 100 years of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Ontario and across Canada. Many other commitments slowed her progress over the years. Sadly, just as the work was nearing completion, Veronica passed away. With Veronica's blessing, Sister Joan Driscoll undertook the task of completing the manuscript and preparing it for publication. Early in 2024 ***Wide Sleeves: A History of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada*** will be launched, published by Novalis.

In 1851, four Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Toronto. One hundred years later, the legacy of these four Sisters included a combined membership of three thousand women, supporting an impressive network of schools, hospitals, and social work institutions.



Wide Sleeves is a rich historical panorama documenting the process by which the Sisters of St. Joseph separated into six congregations through their own mission outreach and through bishops who needed their help in various dioceses. The book's main purpose, however, is the story of the Sisters' mission efforts among Canadians in the first one hundred years – efforts to educate, to heal the sick and to care for those who were physically and spiritually in need.

This book will be a lasting tribute to those women who worked faithfully to serve the needs of the "dear neighbour."

Sending You Greetings from Your Federation Board!



Front Row (L-R): Georgette Gregory (Toronto), Helen Russell (In Canada).

Second Row (L-R): Sheila Fortune (In Canada), Mary Jo Radey (Sault Ste. Marie/Federation President), Pat Boucher (Toronto).

Third Row (L-R): Bonnie MacLellan (Sault Ste. Marie), Marlene Roy (Sault Ste. Marie), Linda MacIsaac (Sault Ste. Marie);

Fourth and Fifth Rows (L-R): Mary Anne McCarthy (Toronto), Josie McKechnie (Sault Ste. Marie), Loretta Manzara (In Canada), Costanza Romano (Sault Ste. Marie), Dianne Towns (In Canada), Margo Ritchie (In Canada), Priscilla Solomon (Sault Ste. Marie), Nancy Sullivan (In Canada);

Top R: Anne Marie Marrin (Toronto)

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

United by a common story and charism, we Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, form a Federation to empower one another in the passionate living of our charism of active and inclusive love.

Urged by God's spirit, we collaborate with Sisters of St. Joseph globally and respond to the evolving reality of our world, bringing healing and hope to all creation.



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