



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

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to

do for it whatever I can...I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw "Dedicatory Letter"
Man and Superman

In this newsletter, you will find a wonderful tribute to Jeanne Fortin (Sister Veronica) written by Mae Kierans, archivist for the SSM Congregation. But since her death at the beginning of February, I cannot help but be filled with the Federation Lessons she taught me; so please permit me my own reflections on my dear friend.

The first Federation Lesson I learned from Jeanne, was to learn from our History. In Jeanne's life, it was on the waves of the Second Vatican Council and a year of Sabbatical Study in France. Here, she encountered God in the image of Mystery. After a year of travelling Europe and France and completing her degree, she just "happened" to drop in to Le Puy. It is 1969, and there she meets two Sisters of St. Joseph from the newly founded U.S. Federation, Julie Harkins (Boston) and Monica Flynn (Wheeling, West Virginia).

They are awaiting others from the U.S. to begin the work of refounding by studying the original documents of our founder, Jean Pierre Medaille. This chance encounter changed Jeanne's life as she would be invited to join the Americans in translating and giving to us our own History in the Eucharistic Letter, the Reglements, the Maxims with all of it wonderfully woven together in the Consensus Statement.

This propensity to seize the moment is also the source of the second Federation lesson from Jeanne... the Mission never ends. This was true on so many levels in Jeanne's life from teaching



Sr. Jeanne at her 75th Jubilee in 2015

to parish work to retreat work, but the invitation to marinate in our history and charism would spill over into her zest for life. She wrote her life story at age 75, and dutifully handed it in to the Archives. But she would have to ask Mae to take it out again...four more times! She writes of teaching the Novices about our History and Charism at age 87, then of teaching meditation to Kindergarteners at 88. She stops her entries at age 92, but that leads to her third Federation Lesson.

She writes of the privilege of being on

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the Research and Medaille Teams saying, “The experience for me, provided a broader view of my identity as CSJ and created an enthusiasm for the Congregation in its wider sense.” This was the Federation Lesson of a Love of Community. Jeanne loved her vocation as a Sister of St. Joseph and saw the “chere prochain” in all that she did...the dear neighbour was indeed the one “next to her.” This was true right to her dying day as Sisters and staff, Associates and friends

all came to pray with and for her. She was bringing the Family of Joseph together right to her last breath when Mystery brought her home.

Jeanne’s learning from history gave her the ministry of a lifetime, and lifelong friends across the U.S. and Canadian Federations. Her missionary zeal would take her into her 102nd year of life. And her great love of Community life has had the effect of GB Shaw’s torch, which Mystery gave her to burn brightly for us all. Rest in peace, Jeanne.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Carole Umana**

The work for social justice and peace takes place at many levels: through grassroots and community efforts, in partnership with like-minded organizations and groups, and at the highest political levels. Speaking to the latter: for almost forty years, the Sisters of St. Joseph globally have been a determined and effective voice at the United Nations (UN).

When His Holiness Pope Francis visited the United Nations in 2015, he described it as “necessary”, adding that the UN can be “the pledge of a secure and happy future for future generations”. Indeed, many agree that the UN serves as the unique global forum where countries and global citizens can raise and discuss the most difficult issues.

Since 1985, the Sisters of St. Joseph have been represented at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the

Department of Public Information (NGO/DPI), and since 1999 with General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In actuality, this work began in 1978 when Sr. Mary Alban Bouchard (Toronto) and various peace groups attended the First Special Session on Disarmament at the UN headquarters in New York City. One year later, Sr. Mary returned to New York and with the support of the UN Chief of NGOs and other NGO representatives, the participation grew to include weekly briefings, publications for Catholic missions, research, youth delegations and attendance at events. By December 1985, the support from various Sisters of St. Joseph congregations and federations had grown so strong that our UN-NGO applied for and was formally accepted under the UN Department of Public information with the name: Congregations of St. Joseph.

Today, the Sisters of St. Joseph UN-NGO has General Consultative Status - the highest status which, in the words of the UN, “is granted to large, international NGOs

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With deep gratitude to and respect for the Indigenous Elders and Peoples who have cared for these lands since time immemorial, the members of the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada recognize that its work and that of its committees take place on numerous Indigenous territories and under at least 46 treaties and other agreements in what is now called the ‘Province of Ontario’. In addition to the three regional Land Acknowledgments – [In Canada Congregation](#), [Sault Ste. Marie Congregation](#), and [Toronto Congregation](#) – we, as one, honour the original protectors of these lands, affirm our commitment to right relations with all Indigenous Peoples, and commit to working together to care for our shared lands and waters.

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that work on almost all the issues on ECOSOC's agenda.”

As a legacy project of the Sisters of St. Joseph internationally, our UN-NGO plays a vital role by bringing social justice, environmental, Indigenous issues, and human rights concerns to UN discussions by amplifying the voice of those who work tirelessly at the grassroots level and within St. Joseph congregations worldwide. Concretely, our UN-NGO is active in several UN committees, subcommittees and commissions, including the Justice Coalition of Religious, NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons, Mining Working Group and its Amazon Subcommittee, and NGO Committee for Social Development and its Grassroots Subcommittee. At the same time, our UN-NGO

hosts Sisters and others at key UN meetings to act as expert witnesses around issues that affect their regions.

For almost four decades, the Sisters of St. Joseph UN-NGO has been present, raised important issues and voices, and participated in key UN committees and commissions -- all with the mission to reflect a profound love of God and neighbour. “Whether we are among the people who live in pockets of poverty and neglect, in middle class neighborhoods, or areas of greater affluence, we are *Sisters of the Neighborhood* trying to meet the varied needs of people and to create centers of relationship and unity”.¹ To be sure, our UN-NGO IS making a world of difference.

¹ From the St. Joseph Congregations UN-NGO mandate.

CSJ BLUE COMMUNITY - World Water Day **Loretta Manzara, CSJ on behalf of the Blue Community Steering Committee**

As a human right, we must balance everyone's water needs. This #WorldWaterDay, let's unite and use water to build a more peaceful future.

The Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada has been a Blue Community since 2017. Seven years ago, our focus was specifically on disengaging from the consumerism of bottled water. Through the education of Sisters and staff we managed to eliminate bottled water from our residences, and wherever we held assemblies outside our own Motherhouses we insisted on using only water provided from taps – although chilled! We have stood alongside other water protectors at rallies opposing the continued granting of rights to companies that profited from bottled water. During those days we became acquainted with Indigenous persons who voiced their truths about the sacredness of water. With each of these encounters we grew more aware of the privilege so many Canadians have in accessing clean drinking water – and yet still some communities are under bottled water advisories. These continue to be chipped away as government

funds become more available.

This year as we celebrate World Water Day on March 22 we are invited to reflect on the words *Leveraging Water for Peace*, the United Nations' theme for 2024.

St. Francis of Assisi always comes to mind with the word *Peace*. And with the word comes the melody for “Lord, make me a means of your peace”.

How can we be peacemakers when it comes to water? Check out the information provided in the United Nations World Water Day 2024 Factsheet [World Water Day | United Nations](#).

One fact: Water does not respect borders, and 153 countries share basins. Only 24 countries have cooperation agreements. Water scarcity is increasing because of overuse and climate crisis. As well armed conflicts make water and its infrastructures targets or weapons of war.

International Water Law has developed a number of principles, norms and institutions that provide the basis

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of international water cooperation and result in greater stability and conflict prevention. ["A Matter of Survival" | Geneva Water Hub.](#)

At the UN Water Convention in 2023 countries spoke about treaties and cross border water cooperation.

Water has been described as the next petroleum, meaning the next commodity that will bring profit and control to the owners. Yet water is a sacred gift for all. Water is a human right and not a commodity. Rather than water being a source of conflict across borders, the United Nations fact sheet proclaims water as a tool for peace.

A few of the points:

Poorer communities are severely affected by water scarcity, an increasing problem around the globe. The fact sheet states: "To build resilience against climate change and to serve a growing population equitably and sustainably, an integrated and inclusive approach, centered on human rights, and based on sound, trusted data, must be taken to managing this finite resource."¹

An integrated and inclusive approach suggests "Water can be a catalyst for peace at all governance levels.

- At the community level: bringing together different water users around a common cause providing an entry point for dialogue, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. Might I suggest that this is what active Canadians did in creating a dialogue with government over the privatization of water.
- At the national level: providing a starting point for coordination across interests.
- At the transboundary level: providing a starting point for communication and broader cooperation, including beyond water resources. For example: out of approximately 400 internationally shared aquifers there are only 5 where international agreements exist.

What are the benefits of uniting around water?

"Water cooperation across borders and sectors accelerates progress across Sustainable Development Goals, including delivering safe drinking water and sanitation, enhancing food security, sustaining healthy livelihoods and ecosystems, helping to address resilience to climate change, contributing to disaster risk reduction, providing renewable energy, supporting cities and industry, and fostering regional integration and peace."²

In our own locales, Indigenous communities most often raise the alarm about consumption, commercialization, and contamination of water. In listening to their voices and taking up the concern, we too may become instruments singing water's song for peace. Are we ready?

¹ UN Water 22 March World Water Day, page 5

² UNECE and UNESCO (2023), [Interactive Dialogue - Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda | Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)



The efforts of the Council of Canadians Blue Community program continue to grow, with more than 100 Blue Community pledges worldwide! This past January, St. Paul's University in Ottawa also became a Blue Community - which was celebrated at a [special event](#) with keynote speaker Maude Barlow and the presentation to the University of their official Blue Community certificate.



Join the Celebration of **WORLD WATER DAY** Friday, March 22nd

In recognition of the United Nations' World Water Day 2024 "Water for Peace", the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada and its Blue Community Steering Committee cordially invite you to join in a celebration of water as a human right, shared commons and sacred gift.

Sometime During the Day – consider honouring water with the Federation Ecology Committee's World Water Day Prayer during your prayer service of the day.

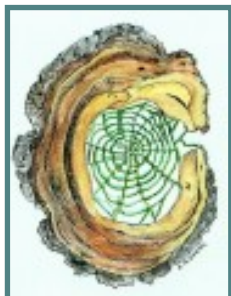
Afternoon (2-3pm EST) join Sisters, Associates/Companions and friends at an interactive Zoom gathering and video presentation of 'Explained – the World's Water Crisis'. This short video looks at the global water crisis as experts strive to determine how to price the world's most valuable resource while continuing to respect access and human rights.

Together we will pray, watch the video and engage in small group conversations.

Please RSVP to cumana@csjfederation.ca by March 17
(the Zoom link will be emailed to all registrants on March 18)

The United Nation's theme of World Water Day 2024 is 'Water for Peace'.

"When we cooperate on water, we create a positive ripple effect – fostering harmony, generating prosperity and building resilience to shared challenges. We must act upon the realization that water is not only a resource to be used and competed over – it is a human right, intrinsic to every aspect of life. This World Water Day, we all need to unite around water and use water for peace, laying the foundations of a more stable and prosperous tomorrow." Visit <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>.



GREEN WINDOW - Ocean Currents **Mary Mettler, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee**

Some years ago I lived in Comox, Vancouver Island and I remember many a day standing by the cliffs and gazing in awe at the powerful movement of the Burrard Inlet as it surged north towards the Arctic Ocean. Have you ever stood at the edge of the ocean and wondered what keeps it moving? There is constant motion in the ocean in the form of deep currents which flow through all the world's oceans. These currents are driven by the contrast between different masses of warm salty water and cold salty water and by changes in the density of water as a result of both temperature and salinity.

The main Atlantic current is called the Atlantic

Meridional Overturning Circulation, (AMOC), and is referred to as the global conveyor belt. AMOC brings warmth to various parts of the globe and also carries nutrients necessary to sustain ocean life. This current consists of a northward flow of warm, salty water in the upper layers of the Atlantic Ocean and a southward flow of colder, deep waters. This current is also driven by changes in the atmospheric weather and the planet's rotation. This current is part of the circulation in the oceans and it is the zonally integrated component of surface and deep currents in the Atlantic Ocean following a pattern of north to south and from south to north.¹

This constant overturning movement of ocean water

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GREEN WINDOW - Continued

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plays a crucial role in redistributing heat, nutrients and marine life across the planet, influencing climate and ecosystems.

These currents provide for the circulation and the overturning of ocean waters. and are as essential to the ocean as our own bodily circulation is essential to us.



Map showing part of AMOC (National Oceanic Atmospheric Admin)

This complete overturning is a very slow process and takes about 1000 years to do a complete circle.

Research studies by oceanographers from many different universities are affirming that this circulation system

is heading toward a tipping point² in that it is slowing down. Some of the consequences of this slowdown and possible collapsing of the AMOC will include freezing temperatures in Europe, scorching heat in the tropics and increased sea level rise in the North Atlantic. And some researchers are now saying that the tipping point may be closer than was earlier predicted.

Due mainly to human created global warming, the increasing fresh water inflow from melting ice sheets and swollen rivers are reducing the salinity and density of the water and disrupting the normal current flow causing huge sea level rises, extreme heat waves and more intense storms and rainfall.

And this is changing the pattern of global ocean circulation, reducing the required "overturning" of the cold waters from below to the warmer waters above. We are certainly seeing evidence of floods from rising sea levels and extreme heat in different areas of our planet. Most of the heating from global warming is accumulating in the oceans. Analysis over the past ten years is showing that ocean heat content is rising year over year and communities on land are being threatened by this.

As you read this, what part of this critical situation concerns you the most? Is there one concrete action you might take to raise your own consciousness of this disturbing reality.

An excellent 13 minute [YouTube video](#) from PBS explains how the currents interact and the critical importance of AMOC.

¹ Wikipedia

² Inside Climate News, Bob Berwyn, Feb. 9/24

FEDERATION OFFICE FOR SYSTEMIC JUSTICE - Repairing Relationships, Changing Systems Sue Wilson, CSJ

In February, Joan Atkinson, Varka Kalaydzhieva, and I attended the [United Nations' Commission on Social Development](#) (CSocD) 2024. It was good to be there together so that we could share thoughts on the meetings we attended.

This year's Commission brought together government representatives, businesspersons, academics, and members of civil society organizations from around the world to examine how, collectively, we can contribute toward the elimination of poverty. The theme of the

Commission was: "Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication".

Yes, the theme is a mouthful, but it boils down to participants sharing both analysis and practical solutions for how to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and work toward the elimination

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poverty. Even though the Sustainable Development Goals are a global framework for measuring progress, this progress depends on good government policies at local, provincial, and national levels. That's why it's so important for us to be there. In meetings, we not only hear ideas on good policies for which to advocate, we also contribute to the analysis, based on what's happening in Canada.

One of the strongest voices at the Commission was that of economist [Bhumika Muchala](#). She examined what's happening in the global economy. She noted that the debt crisis is intensifying inequality between the global north and south, forcing lower-income countries to pay more on servicing their debts than on social protections, such as access to adequate income, food, housing, health care, education and pension.

At the same time, Muchala pointed to a pattern which negatively affects people living with low-incomes in every country of the world: In hard economic times,



governments too often turn toward austerity. They claim, for example, that government can't afford to spend money on social protections; it's better to give tax breaks to corporations in the hopes that it will strengthen the economy. However, Muchala insisted that data from past economic downturns show that government austerity does not lead to economic growth. Rather, when governments invest in the public sector, it leads to greater sustainability.

Conversations about financial and economic models might sound too abstract and theoretical to matter.

But [consider health care in Ontario](#). We know that, per capita, the government of Ontario spends less on health care than any other province. With a weakened public system, the situation is ripe for private equity investment (investment partnerships that buy and manage companies before selling them for a profit). After buying out dentists, pharmacies and nursing homes, private equity is now moving into areas that are more deeply publicly subsidized such as day surgeries, diagnostic facilities, and home care, often delivering inferior service (remember the increased death rate at for-profit long-term care facilities during the pandemic) and pulling dollars out of the public system. Because the goal of the model tends to be to deliver short-term financial gains for investors, this model is not well-suited to health care services.

Financial and economic models affect our daily lives. They can either make our lives better or worse. They can create greater fairness or inequity. They can protect the environment or damage it.

We need financial and economic models that can repair our relationships with earth and each other.

But what can we do?

What if we focus on the conversations we have with friends, neighbours, and families? Might this be a way for us to work at the grassroots level, to shape the stories we tell each other about the economy and our social protections? It's important to shift the assumptions in our dominant social narratives because these narratives function to maintain the status quo. By shifting assumptions, we can help to create the political will for new financial and economic models.

Ask questions: Why does the government have billions of dollars for subsidies to fossil fuel companies but not for social protections? Check the assumptions we make about the need for austerity: Governments can raise billions of dollars simply by agreeing to work together to increase taxes on corporations, stop tax evasion, or implement a small tax on financial transactions. This money can then be used to finance a fair transition to a decarbonized future --- a future that cares for the planet and leaves no one behind.

ASSEMBLY DAY

Ellen Popkie, CSJ Associate, Toronto

On February 24th, Father Thomas Rosica, CSB, was the guest speaker at the Toronto Associates' Virtual Assembly Day on the topic of Synodality.



Father Rosica spoke of the openness and inclusiveness of the October 2023 Synod compared to former Synods. Pope Francis urged all present to “speak boldly”; all topics were “on the table” for discussion. The atmosphere at

the October 2023 Synod was one of openness and respectful listening. Several themes emerged, some of these being: Priestly formation; the role of women in

the Church; reforming the Curia; updating Canon Law; how to make the Church more welcoming, making room for those on the fringes, those who feel marginalized by the Church.

Father Rosica gave us much needed clarity as to what the October 2023 Synod has accomplished as a preliminary to the October 2024 gathering and what will continue to be discussed. The afternoon discussion focused on the Passion of Christ according to the Gospel of Mark.

Many thanks to Father Rosica for sharing his Biblical knowledge, wisdom, and Synodal insights with us. It was a truly informative, hopeful, joyful day.

NORTH BAY COMMITMENT CEREMONY

Karen Sherry, CSJ Associate, North Bay

Things happen and sometimes for a purpose and our Commitment Ceremony was moved from October to November to December. It built up the anticipation as Advent awaits the coming of Jesus, our community was being prepared to receive a gift. We were doubly blessed as the Commitment Ceremony and our Christmas Dessert Social had collided into a cosmic event.

Carol Williams-Boegel proceeded up the aisle carrying the flame. This was a powerful image, ablaze with our charism. She was about to add light to ours, renewing our strength to carry out our charism. We welcomed Carol as a new Associate. She has been a true gift to our community, open to sharing her talents with others in others in our community and in the North Bay community.

Deacon Allan Charette spoke about the gifts that

each of us bring to the table, to the altar. When we think of the altar, we usually think of sacrifice. Sometimes our life situation or our age make it difficult to extend those gifts to others. Sometimes we are called to adapt. Sometimes we are called to sacrifice. Regardless, we are called to serve. Our charism calls us to self-emptying love. We are gift!



(Photo L-R: Carol Williams-Boegel, Ruth Godon and Karen Sherry - Formation Team)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - The Sanctity of Seeds
Linda Gregg, CSJ, on behalf of the Federation Ecology Committee



To plant a seed is to activate one of the deepest mysteries of the universe. Thomas Berry

I have gardened for many years and yet, each spring as I begin to excitedly sort through garden catalogues and thumb through my stock of saved seeds, I pause in wonder. I cannot fathom how mysterious and magical these small bits of dry matter are. Life will spring from these tiny and diverse looking seedcoats. Each has its journey before birthing; whether the winds transporting to new fields, ice scarring the hard shell into new openness or waiting for the right temperature that is the emergent seed's cue to life. When seeds are buried in the earth and are watered, the seed essence nestled beneath their seed-coat somehow knows it is time to breakout. It is the paschal mystery written into the life of a seed and all creation. The journey into the darkness reveals the sacred pathway of being. The journey into letting go and finding new life emerging.

In each seed there is a starter survival kit - a small parcel of food to energize the new life, a starter root and small seed leaf to initiate the photosynthesizing of energy for life. Yet each seed incredibly has scribbled in its being the roadmap of life, its specific pathway of being. Whether a tall, stately cedar tree, or an ordinary and delightful dandelion or even an enticing cob of freshly buttered corn. Embodied in these humble messengers is the sanctity of life.

A I reflected on seeds and the wonder of life I remembered a poem I had written some years ago. It is

perhaps reflective of our own soul's journey.

Deep inside the dark
the seed knows
as sunlight seeps down
to greet it
rainwater trickles
gentle blessing
and the earth warms
softly around it

The seed knows
that it will grow
and change
that it will journey
through darkness
finding a way
following the light

Soon it will be
breaking open its heart
in struggle
in loss
opening into
a new way
of being
a new way
of seeing

Deep inside the dark
with the sun warming down
the seed knows



Linda Gregg, CSJ

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REMEMBERING SISTER JEANNE FORTIN, CSJ SSM (April 18, 1922 – February 8, 2024)
Mae Kearns, CSJ

“Live out your life with one desire only: to be and to become always what God wants you to be, in nature, grace and glory, for time and eternity” (Maxim 73, Jean Pierre Medaille)

These words were core to who Jeanne was: her **nature**

was grounded in her strong family relationships to the fourth and fifth generations; grounded in her French heritage which she excelled in passing on as a teacher, and grounded in her life-long capacity for fun and adventure. “My life has been one of excitement about

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REMEMBERING SISTER JEANNE FORTIN - Continued

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LIFE itself! I don't want to let go of it before God says "COME". Anyone who came into Jeanne's presence felt special in God's eyes and in Jeanne's eyes. She lived life with an exuberant joy that could be contagious as well as inspirational.

Grace was evident in her pursuit of the essence of the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Having studied 17th century French Literature (1968 – 1969) at the Catholic Institute in Lyon, France, Jeanne returned to Canada and joined the Canadian Federation Medaille Team to study and translate our original French founding documents. For ten years 1975 – 1985, Jeanne was also the only Canadian member of the US CSJ Federation Research Team, working with French Jesuit Father Nepper to translate 17th century documents into 20th century English for which she received an award. Jeanne gave many CSJ charism retreats and workshops in Canada and the USA during this time and up to 2004.

Sr. Veronica O'Reilly (CSJ Peterborough) wrote to Jeanne on her 90th birthday in 2012:

"For decades you have studied and prayerfully

reflected on the charismatic impulse that impels our



L-R: Sisters Jeanne Fortin and Veronica O'Reilly

lives and service among dear neighbours. And you shared with us the fruits of that scholarship and contemplation; you shared them with the sweetness, gentleness and candor and excellence so loved by Father Medaille. That

good man of happy memory would surely have longed for the female companions he chose to call Sisters of St. Joseph to continue interpolating the charism in their own time and place. How fortunate for us that... we have had you, Jeanne, to lead us in this work, to be our mentor, our sister and our friend. Your influence has been incalculable, and unknown thousands are in your debt."

In **glory**: we believe that Jeanne has entered eternal life, no longer present to us in this life but confident she is with God and the communion of saints watching over us, guiding us, and protecting us.

PLAN TO VISIT THE ST. JOSEPH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IN FRANCE IN 2024



Twenty years ago, the St. Joseph International Centre was established in LePuy-en-Velay – the town in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of south-central France where the Congregation was founded in 1650. As its mission, the Centre promotes interaction, collaboration and communion among

Sisters, Associates and lay partners based on the values of right relationship with God, with others, and with the planet. Throughout the year, the International Centre hosts visitors and retreat guests as well as program participants in its 16-room building. Located in the crater of an ancient volcano, Le Puy offers many historic and sacred sites including the gateway to the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage trail, the 12th-century Notre Dame Cathedral, the founding kitchen of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the 10th-century St. Michel d'Aiguilhe Chapel (located high on a volcanic rock, or 'puy').

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Starting off the 2024 International Centre list of programs, from May 27 – June 3, Sr. Mary Rowell (in Canada) will present **“Stepping into the Past, Living in the Present, Journeying toward the Future”** – a program especially created for Associates/ Companions, Agrégées, Partners in Mission, and Friends of the Joseph Family. This program offers an exciting opportunity to discover the history, spirituality, and charism of the Family of Joseph in a seven-day long program that integrates prayer, reflection, presentations, sharing, and visits to special sites in the story of the Family of Joseph.

Between June 6-13, the stimulating **“Charism in Motion”** program will be offered by Sr. Michelle Leshner (Philadelphia) and is open to younger adults (aged 21-49) with a relationship to the Sisters of

St. Joseph and their charism as way to interact with others united in the mission.

In the fall (September 8-14), Sr. Jane Delisle (Orange) will lead the popular **“The Lace is Not Yet Finished”** – a program through which participants get in-touch with and claim once again the transformative power of this charism in our midst. Together, participants will also explore sacred sites in Le Puy and Lyon.

The inspiring **“Mission Alive!”** program will be offered between September 28-October 5 by Sr. Dolores Clerico (Philadelphia) for lay partners associated with one of the ministries founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph as an immersive pilgrimage into the original spirit and global dimension of the charism and spiritual tradition.

You can read more about the 2024 International Centre programs as well as register [here](#).

SR. MARY ANNE MCCARTHY RECEIVES UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ARBOR AWARD

Many congratulations to Sr. Mary Anne McCarthy (Toronto) for receiving the prestigious Arbor Award from the University of Toronto for her outstanding service to the University of St. Michael's College (USCM). The Arbor award was established in 1989 and is the highest honour granted by the UofT in recognition of sustained contributions to specific academic units - such as faculties, colleges or institutes.

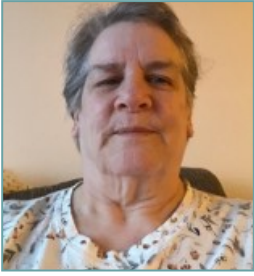
In January, Sr. Mary Anne and other 2023 Arbor Award recipients were honoured at a special ceremony hosted by USMC President, Dr. David Sylvester. As a representative of the Sisters of St. Joseph on the Collegium of the University of St. Michael's College, Sister contributed to their strategic planning process and offered valuable input to the new mission, vision and values that will guide USMC towards a future of enhanced sustainability and impact for the common good.

As Sr. Mary Anne shared: *“I was happy that this award not only recognizes my personal involvement with the University of St. Michael's College (USMC), but more importantly honours the many Sisters of St. Joseph who have greatly contributed to the enrichment of student life at USMC and the University of Toronto”.*



Sr. Mary Anne McCarthy and UofT President Meric Gertler

VOCATION ANIMATION - The Vocation of a Sister Teacher **Pat Carter, CSJ, on behalf of the Vocation Animation Committee**



I started this journey as the eldest child of five siblings. Every day I would return home from Kindergarten to teach my brothers and sisters and teddy bears what I had learned that day from my teacher. So, I do not think it was a surprise to anyone in my family that after the novitiate I would attend the Faculty of Education.

At the Faculty, in preparation for upcoming interviews our professors told us, "If you did not attend school in Sault Ste. Marie, there is no point in sending an application there. They only hire their own." However, for this applicant there was a loop hole, there was a number of positions protected for Religious in the Collective Agreement, so I was hired.

I remember the early years like they happened yesterday. I had a HPE degree so I was happy to teach Physical Education, but being the last one hired, I was invited to stretch my skill sets to teach Grade 9 and 10 students Science, PE, English, Religion, and anything else the department heads wanted me to tackle. Courses were offered initially at the General and Advanced levels. I remember that in my first year our Board experienced a six-week strike action. Once the strike was settled, I asked the Sister teachers I lived with, "How do I determine what to cut out of the courses?" Their guidance, "Teach the important ideas." In my

limited experience, all of the ideas were important.

Overtime I wanted to exercise my leadership skills so I applied to be the Athletic director and Department Head of PE. When opportunity provided a chance, I took the role of chaplaincy leader. I missed the classroom interaction too much, so I returned to teaching and became the Religious Education department leader. Of course, with every government there were new policies of 'de-streaming', and then restreaming with new names for the streams. There were tough days being an educator, especially with Mike Harris' "Common Sense Revolution." I had had the dream of being the Religious Education Consultant and had been working on a Master's degree to prepare myself for that role. The "Common Sense" agenda removed all curricular support positions in school boards, decreased the number of school boards, eliminated Grade 13 and introduced EQAO testing of students. And we had another general strike in the province.

Eventually the government changed and curricular supports were put back into place and I was able to become the RE Consultant and Faith Animator. It has been a dream job for the last 15 years. I was invited to work on provincial teams to create new RE curricula and to create resources for Catholic Education Week with other dedicated educators from across the province.

My career has blessed my life with meaningful ministry, memories and relationships to last a lifetime. I may be the last teacher who is also a Sister of St. Joseph in Canada. I am looking forward to the new endeavors that God has instore for me.

SAIL-A-BRATION TIME
Donna Smith, CSJ

Dear Sisters, can you believe that we have been gathering for a quarter of a century to enjoy one another's company and sharing our talents?

Well, this year we celebrate our 25th anniversary at the Mariposa Inn Best Western in Orilla August 19-

22, 2024 (in person only). We have lots of memories we would like to share with you, and we would like you to send your favorite memories to us.

Our theme this year is *Gathering & Sharing with Joy &*

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Gratitude. The Committee is in the planning stages and will meet again in April to plan further details. So, what do we want to celebrate? Why are we celebrating? How will we commemorate this special anniversary? You will have to come and find out.

“I’m speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given us.” (adapted Romans 12:3 The Message) The perfect scripture passage to help us celebrate this wonderful time stamp in our history. Our largest gathering on record was in 2013 with 98



Sisters present. We had an Attitude for Gratitude when we celebrated our 20th anniversary back in 2018, let’s build on that. So, send us those memories, you will find our names and emails below to make it easier for you.

See you in Orilla in August ready to have some fun remembering the past quarter of a century.

Your SAIL team,

Costanza Romano cromano@csjssm.ca

Pat Carter pcartercsj@gmail.com

Anne Purcell akpurcell@rogers.com

Bonnie Bryson bbryson@csjcanada.org

Donna Smith dsmith@csjcanada.org

FROM THE ARCHIVES – The Erard Harp Mae Kierans, CSJ Sault Ste. Marie Archivist

There is a fascinating musical mystery in our Motherhouse: the presence of a rare semi-grand Sebastien Erard Harp!



Its presence was evident right from the opening of St. Joseph Motherhouse as illustrated in the 1939 promotional brochure for St. Joseph’s College and Motherhouse. How did it get from London England to North Bay?

The harp was crafted in the London Great Marlborough Street factory of Sebastien Erard (1752

-1831) and his nephew Pierre Erard (1794 – 1855). Sebastien, a French contemporary of Mother St. John Fontbonne, had moved his Paris factory to London in 1793 to escape the French Revolution threat to his life. Meanwhile, Mother St. John was imprisoned in St-Didier-en-Valey. Erard’s remarkable skill had attracted the notice of musicians and musical instrument makers of eminence.



However, his increasing fame and several commissions for the likes of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette placed him at risk. He returned to Paris in 1812. Pierre remained in London and directed the establishment until 1822. (Wikipedia)

The brass patent plate (#5527) on the harp gives the London address and is associated with the date December 10, 1835, (the year before Mother St. John sent six Sisters to North America) making it 188 years old in 2023.

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Erard invented the first double movement seven pedal action harp, allowing a harpist to perform in any key or chromatic setting. This mechanism, visible on our harp is still used by modern harp makers.

Erard Harps are rare in Canada; it is estimated only four exist. How did this Erard harp find its way to St. Joseph's Motherhouse when the Sisters moved from St. Joseph's (later St. Mary's) Academy in January 1939? Was it a gift from some father to his daughter? Alternatively, was it from a benefactor to the Music Department of the convent?

No longer able to produce heavenly music, this gracefully beautiful instrument is keeping silent about its secret history.

We are grateful to Karl Dittmann, a local harp

tuner and technician who meticulously restored the Erard harp now displayed in our Motherhouse Heritage room. Bill Milne from our Maintenance Department carefully built the elegant display case from oak recovered from the former Sacred Heart Chapel wings.



MY IMMERSION EXPERIENCE *Kathleen O'Keefe, CSJ*

God's call to spiritual ministry has evolved in my life. In 1990, after some training through the Jesuit Spirituality Centre in Guelph, I began to accompany



women and men as a prayer companion. Being a member of parish pastoral teams, I offered days of

prayer. After acquiring a Diploma in Spiritual Direction from Regis College in Toronto, I offered spiritual direction to more and more people. Over time, I joined various retreat teams at spirituality centres. Then, once I finished a Summer Practicum at the Jesuit Spirituality Centre in 2015, spiritual direction and retreats became my full-time ministry.

As a Sister of St. Joseph, spiritual ministry intersects with my vowed life. Like our CSJ founder, Fr. Jean-Pierre Medaille, I consider myself a "traveller on the road of God's glory." I have worked at Medaille House and Villa St. Joseph Ecology and Spirituality Centre. In 2021 I moved from London, ON to Springtown in the Ottawa Valley to take on the role of Director of Stillpoint House of Prayer. Now in 2024, I am spending the winter months companioning and collaborating with Rosemary O'Toole, CSJ at the **Upper Room Home of Prayer** in Nepean (Ottawa) while still maintaining an active role in the operation of Stillpoint.

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MY IMMERSION EXPERIENCE - Continued

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The Upper Room is celebrating its 40th Anniversary this year. God has abundantly blessed this ministry. The Upper Room is a Home of Prayer, a School of Prayer, and a Community of Prayer. I appreciate the contemplative atmosphere and the beautiful chapel. Over the past seven years, I have intensely studied and reflected on Fr. Jean- Pierre Medaille's life, vision, the Maxims, and the Eucharistic Letter. I have participated in many Zoom sessions based on "A Future Full of Hope" Book Series which includes the core spiritual teachings of the Upper Room. The Emmaus Program trains many women and men in spiritual direction and the facilitation of retreats. This two-year program has been offered ten times. I am involved with planning the future of this enriching opportunity.

Immersed in the life of the Upper Room, I have come to know and pray with many of the Upper Room Community members. The Little Design Communities have been a particular focus. These faith sharing groups, scattered throughout the world, offer hope by creating pockets of love. Every two months, we

globally connect on Zoom for lifegiving conversations.

"Behold! I do a new thing!" (Rev. 21:5) The Spirit of God is very much at work. Since Pentecost of 2023, a collaborative association has been formed between The Upper Room Home of Prayer, Stillpoint House of Prayer, and Galilee Retreat Centre in Arnprior. There is



regular correspondence between us as we share resources. We are stronger together. Stillpoint is now blessed with a team of six spiritual directors. In addition to silent retreats, we now offer themed retreats and workshops. As I move back and forth between Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley, may the spirit of Fr. Jean-Pierre Medaille continue to inspire me.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Associates/Companions' Annual General Meeting – May 28 to 30



You are cordially invited to this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Sisters of St. Joseph Associates/Companions which will take place (via Zoom) half days on May 28, 29 and 30.

This year, Janet Norman will lead the retreat portion of the meeting with the exciting topic "Unity and Reconciliation". Janet is a retired diaconal minister and served at St. Andrew's United Church in Sault Ste. Marie for more than

thirty years. Today, she offers retreats at the Shalom Place Spirituality Centre (in Sault Ste. Marie) through which she encourages others as they explore their connection with God. As a retreat leader, Janet uses storytelling, guided meditation, scripture, journaling, reflection, and questions to help participants become more familiar with the many unique ways God continues to be a loving and active presence in each person's life.

Plan to attend this year's Annual General Meeting, and please know that registration and other details will be emailed out in mid-April by your local Associate/ Companion Leader. (photo credit: Shalom Place Spiritual Centre website)

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

Leah Watkiss, Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care

The Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care of the Sisters of St Joseph of Toronto focuses on three priority areas: the climate emergency, Indigenous justice, and labour exploitation. In each of these areas, we use the tried and true model of Sisters of St Joseph: connecting with affected communities on the ground, identifying gaps, and working to fill those gaps and unmet needs.

One of our responsibilities includes running the *Collaborative Network to End Exploitation (CNEE)* which works to raise awareness about the spectrum of exploitation of people. The goal of the CNEE is to inspire action for structural and societal changes.

Migrant workers keep Canada's economy moving by performing essential work and enriching the fabric of our communities. Yet failings in Canada's immigration and labour policies mean that these workers are regularly underpaid, overworked, and abused. The CNEE has developed several outreach and education tools that have reached hundreds of people across Canada, making them aware of what is happening and what they can do to change it. One tool is our [short, animated video](#) about working conditions of agricultural migrant workers in Canada. Another tool is our [Migrant Worker Exercise](#). During the exercise participants take on the role of a migrant worker, experiencing some of the barriers workers face on a

daily basis. While deciding how to navigate a dangerous, uncertain future, participants learn to act in solidarity with migrant workers to demand fair and equal treatment.

Most recently, we produced an audio documentary about Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The documentary features interviews with migrant workers, policy experts, and service providers sharing insights and suggestions on how to fix Canada's broken immigration and labour systems. [<LISTEN HERE>](#) But labour exploitation does not exist in a vacuum.

Our Ministry works with an integral ecology framework, mindful of the ways various types of injustice intersect and



interact. This is why we developed *Living Laudato Si'*, a high school program that allows students to explore dynamic, interconnected relationships in a classroom setting. Over the course of three visits, students learn more about this papal encyclical and connect it to their lives and the world around them. Connections are made between the climate emergency, Indigenous justice, and the dehumanization and exploitation of Creation for profit. [<Learn more here>](#)

Our Ministry's newsletter, *Journey for Justice: Listen! Learn! Act!* provides more insights into our ongoing projects and inspires to social justice action. [Read our latest edition and subscribe here.](#)



The Spiritual Ministries Network - Lenten Series

Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada and Associates/Companions

Since February 14th and every Friday morning (9-9:30am) since, Sisters and Associates have gathered on Zoom for contemplative prayer and reflection. The series entitled "Who Is My Neighbour?" has included prayers focusing on homelessness, democracy and the common good, peace and non-violence, and aging.

You are cordially invited to attend the remaining prayers on March 15 and 22. Please register below.

LENTEN SERIES 2024 on Zoom
Contemplative Prayer and Reflection – "Who Is My Neighbour?"

FEDERATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CANADA

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

United by a common story and charisma, we Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, form a Federation to empower one another in the passionate living of our charisma 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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LENTEN SERIES 2024
Who Is My Neighbour?
BEGINS
Wednesday
February 14, 2024
9:00 – 9:30 AM
online



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JOIN WITH US IN COMMUNAL PRAYER – EVERYONE WELCOME

MORNINGS 9:00 – 9:30 AM

- Wednesday, February 14 -- Homelessness
- Friday, February 23 -- Democracy and the Common Good
- Friday, March 01- Peace and Nonviolence
- Friday, March 08- Aging
- Friday, March 15- Suffering and Grief
- Friday, March 22- Moral Courage



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[REGISTER HERE](#)

The Spiritual Ministries Network – Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada and Associates TEL:
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