


SCARBORO missions

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A photograph of Pope Francis, dressed in white papal attire, kneeling on a light-colored tiled floor. He is washing the foot of a man whose head is bowed. The man's foot is resting on a silver metal basin. In the background, the feet and lower legs of other people are visible, some wearing blue sneakers. The Pope's white cassock and a large silver cross on a chain are visible.

“The Church is likewise conscious of the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation...There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation, and build peace.”

Pope Francis during his audience with representatives of the Churches and ecclesial communities and of the different religions.

March 2013

Dear friend of Scarboro Missions...

Thank you for your faithful
prayers and generosity to us.
We will continue to be good
stewards of all your gifts as we
put ourselves at the service of
others. Please note our Lenten
envelope inside this issue for
your convenience.

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priest and lay missionary programs.

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and in Canada. Founded in Canada in 1918 by Fr.
John Fraser, Scarboro's initial purpose was to train
and send missionary priests to China. Forced to leave
China after the Second World War, Scarboro began
working in the Caribbean, Asia, and Latin America.

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COVER: Pope Francis visits Casal del Marmo youth prison in Rome on Holy
Thursday, March 28, 2013, and kisses and washes the feet of 12 young inmates,
including women, Muslims, and migrants from North Africa.
Credit: L'Osservatore Romano.



By Kathy Gillis

Lent... a journey of faith and conversion

Our cover photo features Pope Francis washing and kissing the feet of young prisoners in a Roman jail. After the ceremony, he spoke words of encouragement to them, saying "Press on! Don't let yourselves be robbed of hope. Understood?"

The young people, two of whom were women and some were Muslim, ranged in age from 14 to 21. They gave the Pope a wooden crucifix and a kneeler that they had made in the detention centre workshop.

I wonder if this experience lingers in their mind—this act of evangelization? Pope Francis offered hope, compassion, love, inclusion, reaching out to all, without exception. Isn't this what sharing the Good News is all about?

By his actions, Pope Francis is helping us to understand what it means to witness the Gospel. He teaches us by example to reach out to the poor and those on the margins, to build bridges of friendship and understanding, to cross barriers and borders, not of geography, but of difference. We are to offer hope and life: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (*John 10:10*). This is what the Gospel calls us to do.

Scarboro has a long history of walking in other lands, among other cultures and faiths, and with a commitment to the poor and marginalized. "Going forth" for God and leaving the comforts of the familiar is not easy, but the missionaries all say that they receive from the experience much more than they give. For many it is a journey of faith and conversion, discovering God already present among the people.

My journey with Scarboro Missions these 25 years (*has it really been that long?*) is also an experience of faith and conversion. It is an honour for me to present each issue of *Scarboro Missions* magazine, one voice through which Scarboro shares this lived experience of mission and their understanding of mission today.

May the articles in this issue help

you to be joyful messengers of the Good News and witnesses of hope throughout your Lenten journey, stirring you to compassion, to love, to action, offering life and hope in dark places as Pope Francis did in that Roman prison on Holy Thursday.∞

Fasting and feasting

*Lent can be more than a time of fasting.
It can also be a season of feasting. A time to...*

- Fast from judging others; feast on Christ living in them.
- Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of all life.
- Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of light.
- Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God.
- Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.
- Fast from anger; feast on patience.
- Fast from pessimism; feast on joy.
- Fast from worry; feast on trust.
- Fast from guilt; feast on freedom.
- Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.
- Fast from negativity; feast on affirmations.
- Fast from stress; feast on self-care.
- Fast from anxiety and fear; feast on faith.
- Fast from hostility; feast on peace.
- Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
- Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
- Fast from discouragement; feast on hope.
- Fast from apathy; feast on enthusiasm.
- Fast from suspicions; feast on truth.
- Fast from idle gossip; feast on spreading good news.
- Fast from words that wound; feast on words that heal.
- Fast from talking; feast on listening.
- Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.
- Fast from problems that overwhelm us; feast on prayer.
- Fast from everything that separates us from God;
feast on everything that draws us to God.

(Adapted from a prayer by William Arthur Ward, 1921-1994)





By Mary Boyd

A spirituality of social justice

Theology walking on both feet

A theologian once described the spirituality of social justice as “theology walking on both feet.” There is definitely a spirituality of social justice and it calls us to integrate our faith and actions. **“Faith without actions is dead...I will show you my faith by my actions”** (*James 2:17-18*).

There is a similar theme running through *Justice in the World*, the great 1971 statement from the Synod of Bishops: **“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”** Preaching of the Gospel is taken to mean any word or action that gives witness to faith. The Synod states that “unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the [people] of our times.”

Both personal and social

Spirituality is on the one hand personal, reaching to the deepest level of our being where God touches us and speaks to us. But it doesn't end there. Spirituality is also social and requires a commitment to building

the reign of God by transforming the unjust economic, political and social structures that cause suffering and deny people the right to have life to the full. This is the practice of social justice.

There are at least 150 texts on social justice throughout the Bible. A central theme is liberation from oppression: “Yahweh heard our voice, and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with outstretched arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders. He brought us here and gave us a land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (*Deuteronomy 26:5-9*).

The laws concerning social justice were seen within the context of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The Israelites had been a nomadic and semi-nomadic people struggling with the many challenges to their survival in desert conditions. To manage this, they formed strong communities in which they took care of each other's needs. God's promises were given to the people on the condition that they be faithful to the covenant. God promised that “there will be no poor among you...if only you will obey the Lord your God” (*Deuteronomy 15:5*). God's gifts had a demand: share those gifts with the

whole community. Nobody owned private property and the land, parceled out in equal sizes, could not be sold. The principle was meant to ensure that everybody in the society had a degree of security.

This is a God who sides with the poor, who liberates the oppressed. Our covenant relationship with God today is also expressed in our relationship with those in poverty. True holiness means to be faithful and to establish justice and right. What then does our faith tell us about our social and political responsibilities in these times?

Christ said, **“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”** Yet in the world around us there is a growing gap between rich and poor and global warming threatens all life on the planet. How can we experience community with each other and with the whole of creation when such injustices exist? We are not merely spectators in the drama of life. The Gospel calls us to become new women and new men in service to people and society, taking part in the conversation leading to a change in those structures that cause human suffering. This is clear in all the documents of the Second Vatican Council. One of the great social encyclicals, *Octogesima*

Adveniens (#48), reminds us: “Let each one

examine [ourselves], to see what [we] have done up to now, and what we ought to do. **It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; for these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action.**"

A spirituality of social justice is concrete, not abstract; committed, not neutral; prophetic, not polite. With the power of the Spirit Jesus announced that he was the message of the prophets come true, "the good news to the poor" and "liberty to the oppressed." Faith gives us the courage to denounce the unjust structures that cause poverty and suffering and announce the new vision of society. In the Magnificat, Mary praises God who scatters the proud, who puts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly, who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty. God is a God of action.

Living the spirituality of social justice is not an easy task. The process of action and reflection, of learning by doing and becoming engaged in issues often requires a conversion. Take for example the world trade agreements. How well do we understand them? Are we required to try to understand such seemingly complex issues? The answer is "Yes!" if we are to live the spirituality of social justice. With the advent of the World Trade Organization, we now have an unelected body making the rules for trade. These rules are written

Working for the few

A recent report by Oxfam, *Working for the Few*, shows how extreme inequality is not inevitable, and gives examples of policies from around the world that have reduced inequality and developed more representative politics, benefiting all, both rich and poor. Oxfam called on leaders at the 2014 World Economic Forum at Davos (January 22-25) to make the commitments needed to counter the growing tide of inequality. The report gives a few sobering facts:

- The 85 richest people have wealth equal to 3.5 billion poorest people, half of the world's population.
- Almost half of the world's wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population.
- The wealth of the one percent richest people in the world amounts to \$110 trillion. That's 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half of the world's population.
- Seven out of 10 people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.
- The richest one percent increased their share of income in 24 out of 26 countries for which Oxfam has data between 1980 and 2012.
- In the US, the wealthiest one percent captured 95 percent of post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90 percent became poorer.

Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, at the World Trade Organization negotiations in Bali, December 2013, said:

"While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and of financial speculation. Consequently, there is an outright rejection of the right of States, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control...An even worse development is that such policies are sometimes locked in through trade rules negotiated at the World Trade Organization or in bilateral or regional FTAs [free trade agreements]. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this, we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion...The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenceless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule."

Much of this statement is said by Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), issued in November 2013.

by the largest corporations in the world and are a Bill of Rights for the corporations who stand to benefit from them to the detriment of smaller countries, even to threatening sovereignty. What is perplexing is the willingness of politicians to support these corporations and take their side against the citizens of their own countries. This alliance points to a failure of governments to recognize their role as protectors of the common good—that is, the right to life and all that makes life more fully

human, such as adequate food, clothing, housing, employment, education, health care, and effective participation in decisions; as well as safeguarding the integrity of all creation. What are these trade agreements doing to those in poverty? How are they affecting the environment and other life forms?

More than 45 years ago Pope Paul VI warned in his encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (# 58): "the rule of free trade taken by itself is no longer able to govern international relations."



“The peasants who lose land or whose river is polluted by mining may not know the name of the owner or corporation threatening their livelihood. They certainly will not know which transnationals are buying the minerals, the politicians who signed the trade deals to facilitate its extraction, or the elusive corporate lobbying groups that successfully pushed through those deals.”

Susan George, “State of Corporations—The rise of illegitimate power and the threat to democracy”, a chapter from the Transnational Institute’s newly released report, State of the World 2014.

His main caution had to do with the inequality of market systems that allows the more powerful nations to dominate the weaker ones. There can be no free trade unless it is fair and based on justice. If the common good is one of the main purposes of politics, why do politicians hand the power given to them by the people to the wealthy elites and the corporations to perpetuate unjust structures? Most governments can make policy choices that free people from poverty, or they can choose to continue policies that perpetuate poverty. A spirituality of social justice leads us to question and challenge these situations.

Action for justice

Political action for justice means entering the public debate by posing ethical questions and alternative suggestions. Pope Paul VI stated in *A Call to Action*: **“It is the role of Christian communities to analyze the situation in their own country, to reflect upon the meaning of the Gospel and to draw norms**

of judgments and plans of action from the teachings of the church and their own experience.”

In order to more fully understand the plight of the oppressed and those in poverty, we need to be present among them, listening to their stories—the stories of the hungry, the homeless, the unemployed, and immigrants, and become involved in their attempts to receive greater justice. By doing this we will understand better how we can change the situation either by joining groups or taking initiatives ourselves, not on behalf of the victims but in solidarity with them, standing with them. Some of the many groups and organizations through which we can act include KAIROS Canada, the ecumenical church coalition; and Development and Peace, the Canadian bishops’ development agency.

In the spirit of the prophets, we are called to denounce injustice and speak the truth to those in power. When we remain silent in the face of injustice we are on the side of the oppressors. Surely we can do our part to increase

the voices for justice so that they cannot be ignored.

The Canadian bishops once described justice as “the political arm of love.” Social justice is the goal and political action is the means to attain that goal. Jesus asks us to read the signs of the times and to analyze the economic, political, and social structures that cause human suffering. There are many ways that we can live the spirituality of social justice.∞

Mary Boyd served for more than 21 years as Director of Social Action for the Diocese of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, and is active in several social justice organizations. In November 2013, Mary was named a member of the Order of Canada for her contributions to the social justice movement, particularly in the struggle against poverty, homelessness, and underemployment.



Part of our life's journey

A Lenten reflection

By Fr. Shawn Daley, S.F.M.

Lent is a journey. But more than that, it is a chance each year for us to look at our life's journey. Most Latin languages use a word for Lent, *quadragesima*, which means the 40th day before Easter. However in English we use a variant of the German word for spring, *Lenz* (or in Dutch, *lente*). Basically, the word means length—referring to fact that the days are getting longer. So Lent is a season that comes around every year; it is part of our life's journey.

The 40 days of Lent give us an opportunity to reflect on our attitude towards conversion. Do we desire to become lovers of Christ's mystical body by accepting that we are part of it? Or do we decide that we are better than all the rest and believe that we form something alone? These are the temptations—of power, glory, and greed (in French they rhyme: *pouvoir, valoir, vouloir*). All humans struggle with these temptations. When we are not struggling with them we are in a state of *acedia*; that is to say, spiritual laziness, which means we do not want to journey, so we set ourselves apart from humanity and from the possibility of conversion.

“The Spirit of God is something disturbing, driving... desiring to turf us out of our everydayness.”

*Dom Odo Casel (1886-1948),
Catholic monk and liturgical pioneer*

Moses journeyed up Mount Sinai for 40 days; the People of God journeyed in the desert for 40 years; Elijah travelled 40 days to Mount Horeb; Jonah gives the people of Nineveh 40 days to repent; Jesus journeyed into the desert for 40 days; and the disciples waited 40 days for the Ascension. These are archetypes of people who are not lazy, of people who have paved for us the path of salvation. When we do not journey, we do not simply ignore Lent, we ignore life.

Here in Guyana, the land of many waters, journey is the hallmark of its people. Guyana is called the land of six peoples, all of whom have journeyed here over time and all of whom believe that they are Guyanese. If you wish to use biblical terms, they have all converted, after their journey, to become one people: Guyanese. The people have all come from somewhere else, but thanks to the commonality of their journey, they are now all Guyanese. They know their roots, but their real pride comes from being Guyanese.

In the Dominican Republic we do not see the same appreciation of people's common journey. This island republic has decided that not all people who have journeyed there will be called Dominican. Recently the country has passed a controversial immigration law that renders stateless more than 250,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent. They are recognized neither by Haiti nor by the Dominican Republic, the country in which they were born. This has become an international case and the Apostolic Nuncio in the Dominican Republic is offering to help

mediate the situation. Recently Pope Francis announced the appointment of Haiti's first cardinal. My hope is that the creation of this post will help give a stronger voice to the people of Haiti as they negotiate with the Dominican government. Please keep this refusal to accept a common journey in your prayers.

The Guyanese are warm and hospitable people, and no matter what their faith tradition, they are respectful of all others. I hope that as you and I journey this Lent, we compare this to our life's journey, just to see where we stand. Are we accepting our place in the Body of Christ and loving those around us? Or are we separating ourselves, drawing borders, boundaries, or barriers? To journey is to change, to become someone new, someone renewed in hope, faith, strength, and love. It is an honor for me to be here in Guyana, journeying with a people who have become one.∞

Scarboro missionary Fr. Shawn Daley is presently serving the people of Guardian Angels parish in the region of Berbice, along the Atlantic coastline near the border of Suriname (formerly Dutch Guyana).

Creation care ministry

Exploring the foundations of creation care in Holy Scripture

By Norman Lévesque

In June 2013, I spent a wonderful week at the Manresa Retreat Centre in Pickering, Ontario, at the annual retreat for Scarboro missionaries in Canada. One of Scarboro's stated values is that they "recognize, affirm and celebrate the sacred gift of God's creation, entrusted to everyone." In keeping with their concern for ecology and the integrity of creation, they invited me to present their retreat. It was a week spent in beautiful surroundings and with lovely people who have been involved in social justice and have witnessed to the beauty of God's creation at the four corners of the planet. Some of these precious people were more than 90 years old. What could I, a 32-year-old, teach them?

I talked with them about the foundations of creation care in Holy Scripture. The bible is filled with green pages and I began with my top five passages.

1. In Genesis 2 we read the second story of creation, which presents the human being as the first creature. "God had planted a garden in the east, in

Eden; and there he put the man he had formed." It is intriguing to read that the human and all the animals are formed in the same way. The name Adam literally means "made from earth." God molds Adam from *adamah* (red earth) and from clay (mixture of water and soil), with the tender hands of a potter. Then God blows into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and Adam becomes a living being.

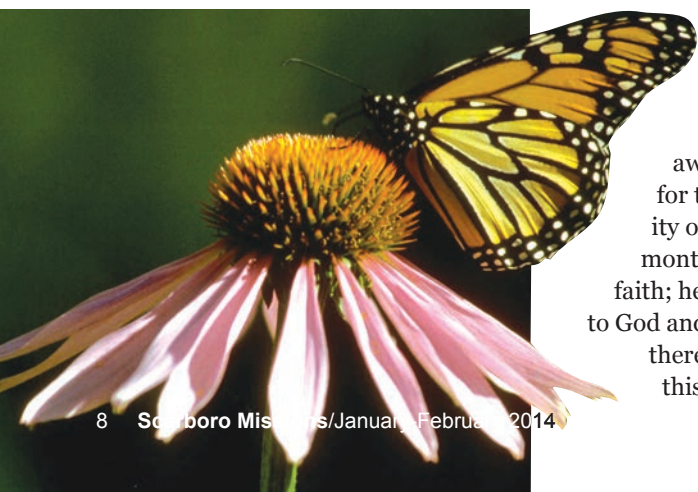
This mythical story holds great meaning: humans come from the stuff that surrounds them—earth, water, and air. We are not extraterrestrials; we are profoundly terrestrial. And God put the human in the garden with this mission: "Cultivate it and keep it." Cultivate refers to ploughing and modifying the terrain so as to obtain one's shelter and sustenance; humans can develop their surroundings. Keep means to preserve sustainably. So this passage (*Genesis 2:15*) contains inspiration for sustainable development. ***What could you change in your daily life to help you live more sustainably?***

2. Everyone knows the story of Noah (*Genesis 6-9*), but people are always surprised to find that it holds great ecological awareness. Imagine caring for the Earth's biodiversity on a boat for months and months. Noah was a man of faith; he and his family listened to God and obeyed God's will. But there is a crunchy detail in this story: two of every spe-

cies came to be saved. Why every single creature? Obviously, the author of this story had insight into the workings of ecosystems and the interconnectedness of all life. Any forest or marine biologist will tell you that when a single species is wiped out from an ecosystem, there are repercussions on all other species with which it interacts. In many cases, the loss of biodiversity in a region disturbs the ecosystem permanently, and in some cases, the ecosystem collapses.

Once we understand the web of interdependence between creatures, the ending of Noah's story makes even more sense. God puts a rainbow in the sky to make the first covenant—a covenant between God, humanity, and every creature on Earth. We are all in the same covenant. We are all in the same boat. So whatever happens to one impacts the other. ***When we understand ourselves as part of the web of life, will we feel more compassion and care for all other forms of life, particularly those that might be close to extinction?***

3. Even though the Gospels do not speak of environmental degradation (because the Roman occupation seemed to spark more discussion about social justice), the prophets in the Old Testament spoke about it. Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah denounced the pollution that was killing off the creatures of the land and related the cause to the wickedness of the people: "How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who live in it, the animals and the birds are swept away"





Norman Lévesque at
the Grand Séminaire de
Montréal.

Greening your church

(Jeremiah 12:4).

Jeremiah calls the people to listen to God in order for this destruction to stop. Pope John Paul II was the first to use the expression “ecological conversion.” He said: “It is immediately evident that humanity has disappointed divine expectations—humiliating the earth, our home. It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain ecological conversion.” As people of faith we need to understand our relationship with all life and become more aware of our responsibility towards God’s creation.

Do you know any modern day prophets who call for an ecological conversion?

4. The beginning of the Gospel according to John (John 1) echoes the story of creation (Genesis 1) but puts emphasis on the Word through whom every creature came to be. The Word that lovingly shaped this world became flesh in Jesus Christ who spoke, healed, forgave, and blessed. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The next time you are amazed at how beautiful an orchid is, how graceful a beluga swims, or how lovely a chickadee sings, remember Jesus, God’s Word, created them. And doesn’t that make you want to protect these creatures?

5. Finally we get to the heart of Christian mission: witnessing to the good news. At the end of the Gospel

In addition to Holy Scripture, environmental values are also promoted in the legends of the saints, in the Eucharistic prayers, and in Catholic Social Teaching (the statements of popes and Episcopal conferences, and the contributions of many theologians). But once we learn about eco-theology, how does that actually change how we live our faith? This is where Creation Care Ministry comes in.

Creation Care Ministry is an official ministry of the Catholic Church, with religious or laypersons mandated by their bishop (or religious superior) to assist faith communities to live a Christian spirituality that is closer to nature. Present since the 1990s in Germany, this ministry has been developing in Switzerland and northern Italy and is sprouting in Canada. To help with this ministry, the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism has developed resources through its Green Church program: www.GreenChurch.ca

Ten steps to greening your church

1. Create a Green Team... Invite members of your faith community (including at least one young person) to be part of the team. Make a list of ecological improvements you have already made and celebrate them. Hold a brainstorming session to identify ways you can promote environmental awareness among church members.
2. Develop an environmental policy that directs purchases, waste management, and other decisions. Make sure your faith community is on board!
3. Add green tips in the parish bulletin or on the diocesan website about how we can respect and protect the environment. These bits of information are important to the community and stimulates personal involvement.
4. You may have to take baby steps at the beginning. Most churches start by placing recycling bins in all the rooms or introducing energy efficient lighting.
5. Make an action plan. All your resolutions are well intentioned, but each one must have a deadline and someone in charge.
6. Emphasize the spiritual dimension. Talk about the new environmental focus in a Sunday homily. When more people realize that protecting the environment is a scriptural value, creation care will grow.
7. Raise awareness by inviting a keynote speaker or showing a documentary film to stimulate discussion. Organize a series of classes on faith and the environment. Participate in other environmental awareness campaigns.
8. Partner with your neighbourhood. We reach more people and accomplish more when we partner with others instead of trying to blaze our own trail. Some churches organize an annual eco-fair that involves community groups.
9. Share your vision. Write a story for the local media, make a documentary, paint a mural, or speak in a school or to a group of seniors. Let others know what you are doing so they can get involved and this important mission can grow.
10. Celebrate! Plan to celebrate God’s Creation in prayer two to four times a year. Prepare special liturgies that integrate prayer, environmental awareness, and a promise of action. In the summer, celebrate an outdoor liturgy to enjoy the beauty and fullness of God’s creation. *(Prepared by Norman Lévesque)*

“We are losing the attitude of wonder, contemplation, listening to creation. The implications of living in a horizontal manner [is that] we have moved away from God, we no longer read God’s signs.”

Pope Francis, World Environment Day, June 5, 2013

according to Mark, Jesus tells his disciples to “go into the world and proclaim the good news to every creature” (*Mark 16:15*). This is quite original but very coherent if we notice that Jesus spends 40 days in the desert “with the wild animals” (*Mark 1:13*). Jesus’ solidarity with every living creature showed in his life on this Earth. He came to renew all creation. As such, he expects his disciples (read: “you and me”) to make the world a better place, not only by loving humanity and caring for the poor and the sick, but also by loving every creature and caring for God’s creation. According to Celano, St. Francis’ main biographer, it is this passage from Scripture that inspired Francis, the *poverello* (poor man), to act in such a fraternal way with every creature. ***What Good News do you witness to the birds and fish, to the trees and waters around you?***

At the end of the retreat, an elderly Sister and Scarboro friend attending the presentations made her way to the front of the room with her walker to thank me. Then she added: “I wish I could have learned this before. The Church and the world would be different.”∞

*Norman Levésque is a theologian and environmentalist, author and speaker, and the director of the Green Church Program offered by the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. He lives in Laval (Québec) with his wife and has a vegetable garden. Norman has recently published a book entitled *Greening Your Church: A Practical Guide to Creation Care Ministry* (Novalis, 2014).*



THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION

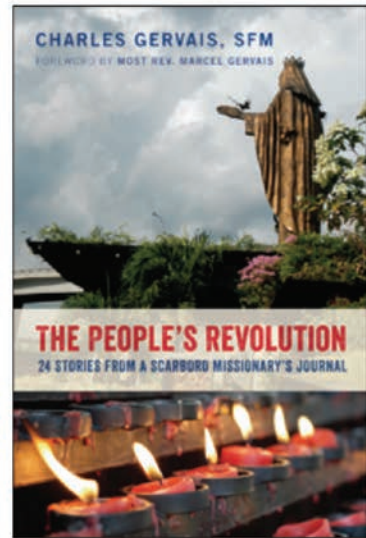
24 Stories from a Scarboro Missionary's Journal

By Fr. Charles Gervais, S.F.M.

More than 50 years ago, Fr. Charles Gervais embarked on a journey to share the gospel and proclaim the faith to the people of the Philippines. He soon discovered it was the people who would proclaim the faith to him.

Through widely engaging stories, Fr. Gervais recounts his experience as a Scarboro Missionary living and working in the Philippines. Shaped and formed by a Canadian missionary community rooted in the gospel and committed to living in solidarity with the poor, he tells of the long journey to the Philippines, the impact of a Church transformed by the Second Vatican Council and a nation torn by violence and injustice that has left many of its people wounded. Yet it is in the women and men with whom he ministers and serves that Fr. Gervais experiences the stunning witness and joy of faith.

Charles Gervais, S.F.M., is a member of the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society, a community of priests and lay people serving women and men in Asia, Africa and Latin America.



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Rogilio

A story from the book, The People's Revolution, by Fr. Charles Gervais, S.F.M.

I'll always remember Rogilio. He was a young boy then, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old. A day before I met him, his father had been shot and killed. This man, a farmer in the hills of Southern Leyte, had been suspected by the military of being a member of the New People's Army, a rebel group in the Philippines dedicated to the overthrow of President Marcos's martial law regime.

One Sunday morning, soldiers picked up Rogilio's father, Generoso, near their small house in the mountains, and despite his wife and children's tearful protests, led him away to be interrogated at the military headquarters. Along the way he was shot. The soldiers ordered some local farmers to carry his body to the town of Saint Bernard, where he was buried without ceremony in a hastily dug grave.

The military claimed he had tried to escape, although he was unarmed and accompanied by eight soldiers, according to his family. The following day, after meeting the grieving widow and her ten children, one of whom was still a babe in arms, I went with Father Lacerna to the village of Santa Cruz. Rogilio led us to the spot where his father had been

killed. The boy pointed to the still visible stains in the grass and cried, "*Dugo kana so okong tatay!* (That's my father's blood)." A lump formed in my throat, and as a wave of anger and anguish swept over me at the injustice of it all, I remembered the line from the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis, where the Lord says, "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the earth" (*Genesis 4:10*). I looked at that young boy standing there quietly and wondered how he would react in future years when he remembered his father's blood upon the grass. Would this violence lead to further violence?

A military investigation into Generoso's death found no one guilty. No charges were laid.

Will the cries of the blood of Generoso—and so many like him—that seeps into the soil of their native lands, from the Philippines to Guatemala to Afghanistan, finally be heard—not only by God, but by people? Truly, we are our brother's keeper, and his pleas for justice must also echo in our hearts.∞



By Murray Watson

Interfaith dialogue

A priority for Pope Francis

When the cardinals elected Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pope in March 2013, many of those involved in interreligious work immediately wondered: What could we expect from this Argentine Jesuit, the former archbishop of Buenos Aires? This new pope—Pope Francis—was following John Paul II and Benedict XVI under whom relationships with Judaism and other non-Christian religions had grown and deepened to an amazing degree.

Within hours it emerged that the new pope's only published book had been a collection of warm, collegial conversations between him and one of his best friends, an Argentine rabbi named Abraham Skorka (in English: *On Heaven and Earth*, Image Books, 2013). In it the pope said: "God is open to all people. He calls everyone. He moves everyone to seek Him and to discover Him." Only hours after his election, he wrote to Rome's Jewish community inviting its Chief Rabbi to attend the Mass inaugurating his pontificate. Pope Francis hoped "to be able to contribute to the progress that Jewish-Catholic relations have seen starting from the Second Vatican Council, in a spirit of renewed collaboration." From the very first days of his papacy, it was clear that Pope Francis intended to reach out beyond the bounds of Catholicism, and even of Christianity.

Pope Francis's first year has been marked by many moments that demonstrate his desire to endorse and build upon the interreligious commitment of his predecessors. The day after



Pope Francis embraces his close friend Argentine Rabbi Abraham Skorka.

his inauguration, the pope met with representatives of other Christian communities, and of many non-Christian faiths. Addressing first the Jewish and Muslim delegates, he emphasized "the importance of promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions," and reminded them that "the Church is likewise conscious of the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect. There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy

and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace." This landmark speech combined the quest for greater solidarity and justice (a theme which has become central to his papacy) with an acknowledgement of the truth, beauty, and goodness that are to be found, and appreciated, in other faith traditions.

Ramadan message

Breaking with precedent, Francis chose not to delegate the writing of the Vatican's annual message for

“The Catholic Church is conscious of the importance of promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions...”

Pope Francis during his audience with representatives of the Churches and ecclesial communities and of the different religions, March 2013

Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. In his own words he said: “We are...called to think, speak, and write respectfully of the other, not only in his presence, but always and everywhere, avoiding unfair criticism or defamation...We are called to respect the religion of the other, its teachings, its symbols, its values.” He spoke of “the great importance of dialogue and cooperation among believers, in particular Christians and Muslims, and the need for it to be enhanced.” Those were powerful words and they were received with gratitude by the world’s Muslim populations.

Remembering the Holocaust

October 2013 marked the 70th anniversary of the Nazi round-up of hundreds of Rome’s Jews, and the Holy Father welcomed a delegation from the Jewish community to the Vatican. He spoke to them of his great sadness over those tragic events and underscored the need to learn the lessons of such bitter experiences to ensure a better future for everyone: “What the [anniversary] day commemorates could be described as a *memoria futuri* [remembering for the future], an appeal to the younger generations not to be indifferent to their own existence, nor to allow themselves to be swept away by ideologies, never to justify the

evil we encounter, always to be on the alert against anti-Semitism and against racism whatever their origin may be. I hope that, through initiatives such as this one, networks of friendship and fraternity between Jews and Catholics may be formed and nourished in this, our beloved city of Rome.”

To mark the conclusion of the Year of Faith (2012-13), Pope Francis drew upon the input of the most recent Synod of Bishops, issuing a remarkable Apostolic Exhortation entitled *The Joy of the Gospel*. Among the numerous important topics the pope addresses in that document is the Catholic Church’s relationship to Judaism, Islam, and other religions: “The Church, which shares with Jews an important part of the sacred Scriptures, looks upon the people of the covenant and their faith as one of the sacred roots of her own Christian identity...God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism.” And, speaking of the other major faiths: “An attitude of openness in truth and in love must characterize the dialogue with the followers of non-Christian religions...Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for

peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities.” None of this was exactly new, but it was spoken with a passionate conviction that clearly marked it as a key goal of Pope Francis’s service.

All of these events and statements can leave little doubt that interreligious dialogue is, and will remain, one of the pillars of the new pope’s leadership. After repeated invitations from Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Pope Francis recently announced plans to travel to Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories in late May 2014.

In a world of so much bad news and negativity, the Catholic outreach to other religious traditions is a genuine “good news” story, which continues to unfold in our times—and which will almost certainly grow and develop further under the papacy of the first successor to St. Peter to have come from the Americas, but one whose embrace clearly includes all of God’s children.∞

Dr. Murray Watson is a Catholic theologian, biblical scholar and interfaith activist who spends part of each year living and teaching in Jerusalem. As a friend of Scarboro Missions, he cooperates with Scarboro’s Interfaith Department in promoting greater knowledge of and greater collaboration with Judaism and the other non-Christian religions.

Scarboro’s Interfaith Department is pleased to announce its new and expanded “Milestones in Modern Catholic-Jewish Dialogue” highlighting key moments in the Church’s relationship with Judaism and incorporating some of Pope Francis’s advances in this field. Now available online at www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/catholic_jewish_relations.php

Challenges for the Church in Asia

The Catholic bishops and churches of Asia work together to serve in the world's largest and most populated continent with its diverse cultures and religions

The following is adapted from a talk given by Scarboro missionary Fr. Ray O'Toole at a meeting of the Secretaries General of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Europe. Warsaw, June 2013.

You may be asking the question: What is a Canadian doing as Secretary General of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences? Why not an Asian? The first secretary of the FABC was an American, a Maryknoll priest who served the FABC for more than 30 years.

I belong to Scarboro Missions, a Society that was founded in 1918 for missionary work in China.

All our priests worked in China up until the 1940s when the country was closed to foreign missionaries. Since it is not possible to do pastoral missionary work in China, I have been working in Hong Kong. Eight years ago I was asked to take on the position of Secretary General for the FABC.

It is our hope that the next secretary will be Asian and that search has already begun.

The FABC has four regions in Asia—South, South-East, East and Central Asia—with 19 bishops conferences. The most recently established conference is Timor Leste, and before that Kazakhstan.

The presidents of the 19 conferences meet every two years and also work together through various committees. The FABC administrative office is located in Hong Kong. There are also nine departments and four desks located in the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Bangladesh, and Hong Kong. The nine departments each assume responsibility for a specific pastoral area: Evangelization, Theological Concerns, Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, Human Development, Social Communications, Education and Faith Formation, Laity and Family, Clergy, and Consecrated Life; and the four Desks deal with Basic Ecclesial Communities, Youth, Women, and





At the 10th plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), held in Xuan Loc, Vietnam, in December 2013, participants representing more than 20 Asian countries discussed challenges, celebrated the FABC's 40th anniversary, and welcomed its newest member—the bishops conference of Timor Leste. Vietnamese government officials and Buddhist, Muslim, and Protestant faith leaders attended the opening ceremony.



L-R: Fr. Ray O'Toole with Fr. Patrick Daly, General Secretary of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE); and Msgr. Duarte da Cunha, General Secretary of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), at the 41st meeting of the Secretaries General of the CCEE. Warsaw, Poland, June 2013.

Climate Change. The FABC also has a documentation centre in Bangkok, Thailand, and many FABC meetings take place in Thailand because of its central location.

Asia is a huge continent with almost 60 percent of the world's population; 40 percent in China and India alone. We see much diversity with countries in the East enjoying high economic development, some experiencing rising development, and others struggling with poverty. From its early days, the FABC and the Churches have developed a pastoral response in the form of a triple dialogue: dialogue with cultures, dialogue with religions, and dialogue with the poor. This is the central thrust of the FABC and the Asian Catholic Bishops' Conferences.

At our Xth Plenary Assembly held in Vietnam in December 2012, there were

13 trends or challenges identified, along with recommendations for a pastoral response. The overarching megatrend that impacts every aspect of Asian life is globalization. On the one hand the ancient cultures of Asia are facing the formidable challenges of a globalizing and homogenizing culture. Driven by neo-capitalism,

economic values are based on human greed and selfishness. On the other hand, the emerging global culture emphasizes freedom, human rights, and equality. As well, information and knowledge are more accessible through the social means of communication. There is a new hope for interconnectedness and solidarity among the families of the world.

The recommendations of the Assembly highlight the need for a renewed effort in the area of evangelization, faith formation, concern for the poor, and other recommendations with respect to threats to life, dialogue and peace, ecology, migrant and itinerant people, indigenous peoples, secularization and globalization, and the translation of FABC documents into local languages.

The final Assembly document says, "How the bane and blessings of economic and cultural globalization can be made opportunities for grace through the New Evangelization is the over-riding challenge of the church in Asia."

Cardinal Gracias, president of the CFABC, in his message to the Synod on the new Evangelization in October 2012 said: "The Asian soul has great respect for life. In some religious traditions animals and plants are considered holy and to be treated with utmost respect. Yet, today there are rising threats to life: ethnic conflicts, violent suppression of different religious persuasions; the tragic threat to life and female feticide, which is commonly practised in some areas because the girl-child is considered a divine curse or a financial burden."

He added: "The Asian soul seeks community and the Asian Church has chosen the Basic Christian Community as a new way of being Church. This has found great success in some places and has led to greater lay participation, formation, and outreach to the 'other,' giving a sense of belonging to many who are otherwise neglected."

In some countries, Cardinal Gracias said, persecutions of Christians is on the rise: "This opposition comes from a dominant religion or sometimes from an ideological thrust that wants to impose political authority on religious groups. The Christian commun-

“For us in Asia, dialogue is a necessity not a luxury. A dialogue of life is something all of us are involved in every day.”

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, secretary general of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

ities feel weak and defenseless in some places, but we have also seen cases of heroic witnessing in the midst of suffering.”

I will add another major challenge for the Church in Asia and that is related to migrant workers. It is difficult to know how many migrant workers there are in Asia, certainly in the millions. Concerns include the impact on families, the rights of migrant workers, and violence and abuse directed against them. In Asia, migrant workers are considered informal labour, that is, they do not come under the labour laws of each country and are not eligible for minimum wage.

In his Synod address, Cardinal Gracias said: “The great insights of Vatican II in *Nostra Aetate* [Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions] are relevant even today. For us in Asia, dialogue is a necessity not a luxury. A dialogue of life is something all of us are involved in every day. In Asia, Catholics are just three percent of the total population with a Christian majority in only two countries—the Philippines and Timor Leste. Religious fundamentalism is making itself felt in our continent.”

Another major challenge for the FABC is the question of China. China has a bishops' conference for the above ground or Official Church, but the conference is not recognized by the Holy See and, if there is an underground bishops' conference, it too is not recognized. FABC earnestly desires that the Church in China be part of the

FABC family. However, formal membership of the Chinese Church in FABC without the normalization of relations between the Vatican and the Chinese government is not possible.

Formal dialogue between the Vatican and the Chinese government is presently at a deadlock principally on the appointment of bishops. However, more than 80 percent of Chinese bishops of the above-ground or Official Church have been legitimized and are now recognized by the Holy See. This is all the more reason for our desire to reach out to them. We are searching for ways to include some Chinese bishops and priests in our programs.

Asia is blessed with a richness of ancient and well developed cultures. It is also the cradle of many of the world's religions. One can identify a deep-rooted spiritual nature of the Asian soul which is constantly in search of the Absolute. For me, as a Canadian missionary priest, it is a great gift and a privilege to work with the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference in its commitment to dialogue with religions, cultures, and with the poor.∞

Fr. O'Toole first went to Hong Kong in 1988. He also served in Canada, at the Toronto School of Theology, and later as a member of the leadership council of Scarboro Missions and as coordinator of Scarboro's Interfaith Desk. His first mission placement was to Brazil in 1964.

The

It's not polite to read other people's mail, but we have been reading St. Paul's letters for the past two thousand years. Unfortunately, Paul's letters often leave us more mystified than enlightened.

Last October, Scarboro Missions sponsored a reading of the letters of St. Paul at our Mission Centre. Through local parishes and through The Catholic Register, we extended an invitation to explore the thought of St. Paul over four Tuesday mornings. Around 30 men and women came.

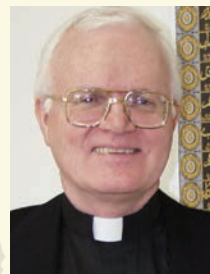
We chose the Letter to the Galatians as our point of entry. In Galatians, Paul describes his personal journey to faith in Jesus Christ and introduces the most difficult theme in all of his letters: “justification by faith.”

“Justification by faith” has to do with who's in and who's out. Who is in the Christian community? One party in the early Church maintained that only those who accepted the Law of Moses, with all of its ritual and dietary precepts, were in. Against this party Paul insisted that anyone was in who had faith in Jesus Christ. At the same time, Paul did not want to discard the moral teachings (the Ten Commandments) in the Law of Moses. In Galatians, Paul not only preserves but also transcends the Ten Commandments by appealing to the Spirit of Jesus as the principle who governs the moral life of the faithful Christian.

The challenge facing St. Paul was how to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with non-Jews. How could the Good News which was born in the Jewish world be translated into the

Gospel

according to St. Paul



By Fr. David Warren, S.F.M.

“For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’...If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”

In Galatians, Paul not only preserves but also transcends the Ten Commandments by appealing to the Spirit of Jesus as the principle who governs the moral life of the faithful Christian.

Gentile world? Paul rose to the challenge.

The efforts of St. Paul have particular relevance to Scarboro Missions. As a missionary community, Scarboro brings the Good News of Jesus Christ into new situations, as did St. Paul. Father John Mary Fraser founded the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society in 1918 in order to recruit, train, and send priests to China. When the Second World War interrupted our work in China, Scarboro took the Good News to the Dominican Republic. In the years since the war, we began witnessing to the Good News in Japan, Guyana, the Philippines, the Bahamas, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and Malawi.

The effort to bring the Good News into new situations continues to define Scarboro Missions. But it not only defines us; it also defines all Christians, as we find ourselves in a new situation. In a letter on mission entitled *Redemptoris Missio* written in 1990, the late Pope John Paul II referred to a situation “where entire groups of the

baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.”

We all know what he was talking about. We have seen this painful situation within our own families where sons and daughters, brothers and sisters no longer actively participate in the life of the Church.

In response to this situation, Pope John Paul II called for a “new evangelization.”

Pope Benedict took up the call when he created the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. And the theme of the most recent Synod of Bishops was “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.”

What’s new about evangelization?

What’s “new” about evangelization? What’s new is not the Good News of

Jesus Christ. What’s new is not the passing on of the Gospel, which the Church has been doing from its earliest days. What’s new is the situation in which we find ourselves. The world has changed enormously in the past 50 years and continues to change. The revolution in communications has created a global consciousness. Never before have we been so aware of other religions. The challenge to us is how to proclaim the Good News in a world where Christianity is now one of many religious options for people.

In his recent apostolic exhortation entitled *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis suggests how to proclaim the Gospel today: “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.”

It’s not polite to read other people’s mail, but I don’t think that St. Paul would mind. His letters inspire us to face the same challenge which he faced.∞

Muslims and Christians in conversation

Scarboro Missions and a Toronto Islamic Centre co-sponsor four evenings of dialogue and discussion

By Paul McKenna

What happens when 15 Muslims and 15 Christians spend four evenings together in dialogue and discussion? In this case, lots of wonderful things.

Late last year, the Scarboro Missions Interfaith Department and the Noor Cultural Centre teamed up to sponsor Muslim-Christian dialogues through small group discussion. Noor is a Toronto Islamic Centre that focuses on Muslim education, social justice, and interfaith dialogue. The first two evenings took place at Scarboro's Mission Centre and the last two at Noor.

Scarboro's Interfaith Department has been involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue for some years and has sponsored numerous events enabling the public to learn more about Islam and Muslim-Christian relations.

This small group experience at Scarboro and Noor was inspired by six weeks of Jewish-Christian dialogue that took place last year when Sr. Lucy Thorson, a Sister of Sion and member of Scarboro's Interfaith Department, brought together Christians and Jews

for small group exchange.

Scarboro Father David Warren, who is committed to building bridges between Islam and Christianity, said: "I have studied Islam, but Islam does not live in books. Islam lives in people. The Muslim-Christian dialogue series was an opportunity for me to discover Islam as it is lived by Muslim men and women. I am grateful for the experience!"

After 13 centuries of not-so-good history, Muslims and Christians around the world are now entering into new levels of friendship and cooperation. Together, Muslims and Christians form more than 50 percent of the world's population (Muslims and Catholics form more than one-third). These statistics alert us to the fact that the Muslim-Christian conversation is the future. And the future is now.

Four themes

Each gathering began with a 15-minute presentation on the evening's theme by a speaker from both faiths. The series themes were: the

challenge of passing on our faith and cultural traditions to the next generation; the challenge to youth living their faith in a multicultural, secular, Internet world; how our sacred books inspire and challenge us to an ethic of social and economic justice; and on the last evening, Muslims and Christians transforming the world together.

Dr. Helene Ijaz, a Christian educator with extensive experience in Muslim-Christian relations said: "Having journeyed in a Muslim-Christian marriage for more than four decades, I am acutely aware of the divisive impact of an approach to interreligious relations which emphasizes differences in religious beliefs, rituals, and laws. These sessions of Muslim-Christian dialogue transcended religion-specific issues by focusing on aspects of religious practice rooted in universal human concerns. This had a profoundly unifying effect on participants and promoted a strong sense of interconnectedness and friendship."

After the opening faith presentations, participants were divided into



Small group discussions helped to build trust and community, and these conversations continued informally after the sessions ended (photo right).





Some of the presenters at the Muslim-Christian dialogue series are (left) Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi and (far right) Samira Kanji, both leaders in the Toronto Muslim community. Centre: Sister Christine Gebel of Our Lady's Missionaries; and Paul McKenna, coordinator of Scarboro's Department of Interfaith Dialogue.

groups of six—three Muslims and three Christians—for an hour-long group dynamic that helped to build trust, community, and participation.

Samira Kanji, director of the Noor Cultural Center and a key figure in the Toronto Muslim community, said: "With each evening I felt a profound sense of gratitude and joy in the diversity in our group...different shades of Muslims and Christians, different cultures, a wide range of ages. And all were welcomed and accepted. If this same acceptance and celebration of diversity could be lived out across Canada, what a gift we could be to the world!"

Continued friendship

At the end of each evening participants gathered for a plenary discussion of the experience. On the final evening, email addresses and phone numbers were exchanged to continue this Muslim-Christian adventure in friendship and dialogue.

Sr. Christine Gebel, a member of the leadership for her congregation, Our



Participants gather for a plenary discussion at the end of each evening.

Muslim-Christian dialogue in the Philippines and Indonesia

When the Golden Rule poster was published in 2000, no one guessed that its reach would extend beyond the borders of Canada. However, in its 13 years, the poster has made its way to the four corners of the Earth and has been published in numerous languages.

In November 2013, we were contacted by Dr. Potre Diampuan, a Muslim educator in Manila, Philippines, and regional coordinator for Southeast Asia and the Pacific for the United Religions Initiative, a peace and bridge-building organization and a UN-accredited NGO. She writes: "We heavily advocate the practice and the teaching of the Golden Rule and your poster is one of the tools that we use in many of our programs, especially in this year's International Day of Peace where the theme is 'Education for Peace.'"∞



Above: Muslim educator, Dr. Diampuan (second from right), shares Scarboro's Golden Rule poster with members of the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs.

L-R: Mr. Gary Domingo, Assistant Secretary for the UN and other international organizations; Mr. Gonar Musor, Director; and (far right) Ms. Bartolome, staffperson. Manila.

Top: Officials and peacebuilding trainees in Central Java, Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population of any country in the world.



“We are called to respect the religion of the other, its teachings, its symbols, its values.”

(Pope Francis, Vatican message for the end of Ramadan, July 10, 2013)

Lady's Missionaries, has a background in Muslim-Christian dialogue in the Philippines. She found the experience of the series “eye-opening and immensely gratifying for everyone who participated, validating the claim that much good resides in interfaith dialogue conducted with an understanding of mutual, sincere respect.”

In the words of participant Khadijah Kanji who is responsible for programming at the Noor Centre: “Our shared religious belief in the inherent equality of all of God's creation set the stage for a conversation that was respectful and enriching, and one that sought to truly see each other as people beyond the stereotypes. Members from both communities expressed to me the kinship they felt with each other, and how they were sad to say goodbye. Verse 49:13 of the Qu'ran tells us that diversity among people is a purposeful act of God in order that we may ‘come to know one another.’ This four-week session of dialogue between Christians and Muslims reminded me of how valuable coming to know one another really is.”∞

Paul McKenna is the coordinator of Scarboro's Department of Interfaith Dialogue. For extensive interfaith resource material, visit Scarboro's website: www.scarboromissions.ca.

An interfaith internship

By Hector Acero Ferrer



Last June I joined the Interfaith Department at Scarboro Missions as an intern. This experience has proven to be illuminating and transformational and has put me in touch with different layers of interfaith work. The awareness raising and networking tasks of the office fit extremely well with Scarboro's larger vision. Their priests and lay missionaries believe that serving God's mission today involves crossing boundaries and borders, most of which are not geographical, but rather represent divisions among people.

Part of Scarboro's mission statement says that they seek “to live simply and in solidarity with the poor and marginalized people of the world and to work on behalf of justice; and “to encounter and celebrate God's presence in the life, history, culture and faiths of the people among whom we live.” These areas of commitment are what drew me to Scarboro, as the intersection of interfaith dialogue and social justice has always been at the forefront of my research and professional life.

Through the internship I have attended conferences, interacted with some of the major interfaith actors in the Greater Toronto Area, and grown in my understanding of other faith traditions. In the summer of 2013, Scarboro took part in the planning of the North American Interfaith Network Conference (NAIN) bringing together interfaith leaders from North America to discuss issues of diversity. I was privileged to represent Scarboro at this conference. Besides learning about anti-bullying campaigns, campus ministry initiatives, and so on, I was able to interact with people who are invested in linking our common humanity to the ethical pillars set by each tradition.



At Scarboro's Mission Centre, part of its central house in Toronto, students perform a Golden Rule skit using the element of water. Mission Centre coordinator Kathy Murtha (right) and her team facilitate World Religions retreat days for Catholic high school students.

Last fall, I attended meetings of different interfaith-focused groups and visited multiple houses of worship. One of the highlights of these experiences was sitting in on one of the World Religions retreats offered to high school students at Scarboro's Mission Centre (see photo above). Participants experience the richness of other traditions through the context of the Golden Rule as it is articulated in all the major religions. The retreat allowed me to witness the openness of new generations to difference and diversity, especially with respect to culture and religion.

Most of the work I have been doing involves learning about others. Perhaps this is my first core learning: that interfaith work focuses on educating ourselves about other faith traditions, the commonalities of humanity, and our place within the larger creation of God.∞



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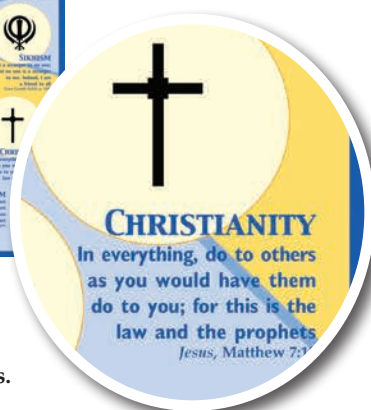
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Letter to the editor

I would just like to say how much I appreciate the work of Scarboro Missions and how well that work is reflected in your magazine. My husband, John (United Church member), and I (Catholic Church member) often find much common ground in your reflections, your special editions (especially the celebration of 50 years of Vatican II), your embrace of the heart-centred Christian community embodied in the words of Pope Francis (Nov/Dec 2013), and in the evolution of your own missionary spirit as you capture both the courage of those first men who left family and friends to become immersed in a strange, new culture and the energy and dedication of the men and women who, even after a successful first career, are called to serve the marginalized in their sometimes war-torn corners of the world. As a Christian family, we feel strongly that the Scarboro Missions faith community provides a space in which Jesus, teacher, healer, face of God in times of human joy and human desolation, is alive and well. This is a faith community that we trust to lead us into the uncertain future.

Ecumenism has lost its soul in the Canadian Christian world. When our son was born 32 years ago, my husband and I were very hopeful that, before he turned 20, Christian churches would be worshipping together, doing youth education and scripture study together, and be committed to changing social and political structures that prevent the marginalized from becoming respected members of the human lifestream. Instead, we have witnessed decades of increasing separation and power struggles, where not even the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed in smaller locales...Your focus on shared Christian values and interfaith understanding and dialogue reminds us of the need to meet other faiths with a core understanding of what it means to be a Christian, regardless of historical persecutions and theological disagreements.

Thank you for allowing me to express my gratitude for the effect you have had on me personally and on my understanding of the path to truth and justice. At one time, I actually considered applying to become a lay partner, as I have 30 years of teaching experience, theological training, involvement in local social justice circles and a working knowledge of French and Spanish. But, alas, I turned 65 in 2013 and will devote myself to a myriad of worthy causes, including the love and care of our first grandchild, born on November 19th in Calgary.

Best wishes to you all for 2014, and know that you are an inspiration to many who may also find the right moment to say 'thank you'.

Lynne Glenney
Lindsay, Ontario

Becoming Neighbours

Accompanying refugees and immigrants to Canada

By Luis Lopez

In January 2013 I started my Regis College School of Theology field placement with Becoming Neighbours, a ministry that accompanies newcomers to Canada. Most have come to Canada seeking refuge and a safe life. They want to begin a new life for themselves and their families.

When I began this ministry I realized that even though I too had been an immigrant to Canada, I never knew the experience of migrants in this way. My family left El Salvador in the 1980s at a time of civil war and unrest. We came to Canada as landed immigrants, so we never felt the same insecurity about the future. The refugee families I have met through Becoming Neighbours must learn to live with uncertainty, some for a short time, others for years as they wait for an answer from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. As the time extends ever longer, hope wanes.

My ministry is to accompany a Spanish speaking men's support group and their families. I support them in whatever way I can, sometimes simply by making sure the coffee is ready for the meetings. They support each other, they teach each other, and I learn with them about what it means to come to Canada and search for a better life without having any assurance that they will stay. Through this experience I have learned to appreciate in a deeper way the experience of my parents who left their lives behind to give their children a better life.

The people I have met in this ministry have great strength and much love to share with others. The story that comes to mind is of one family in our

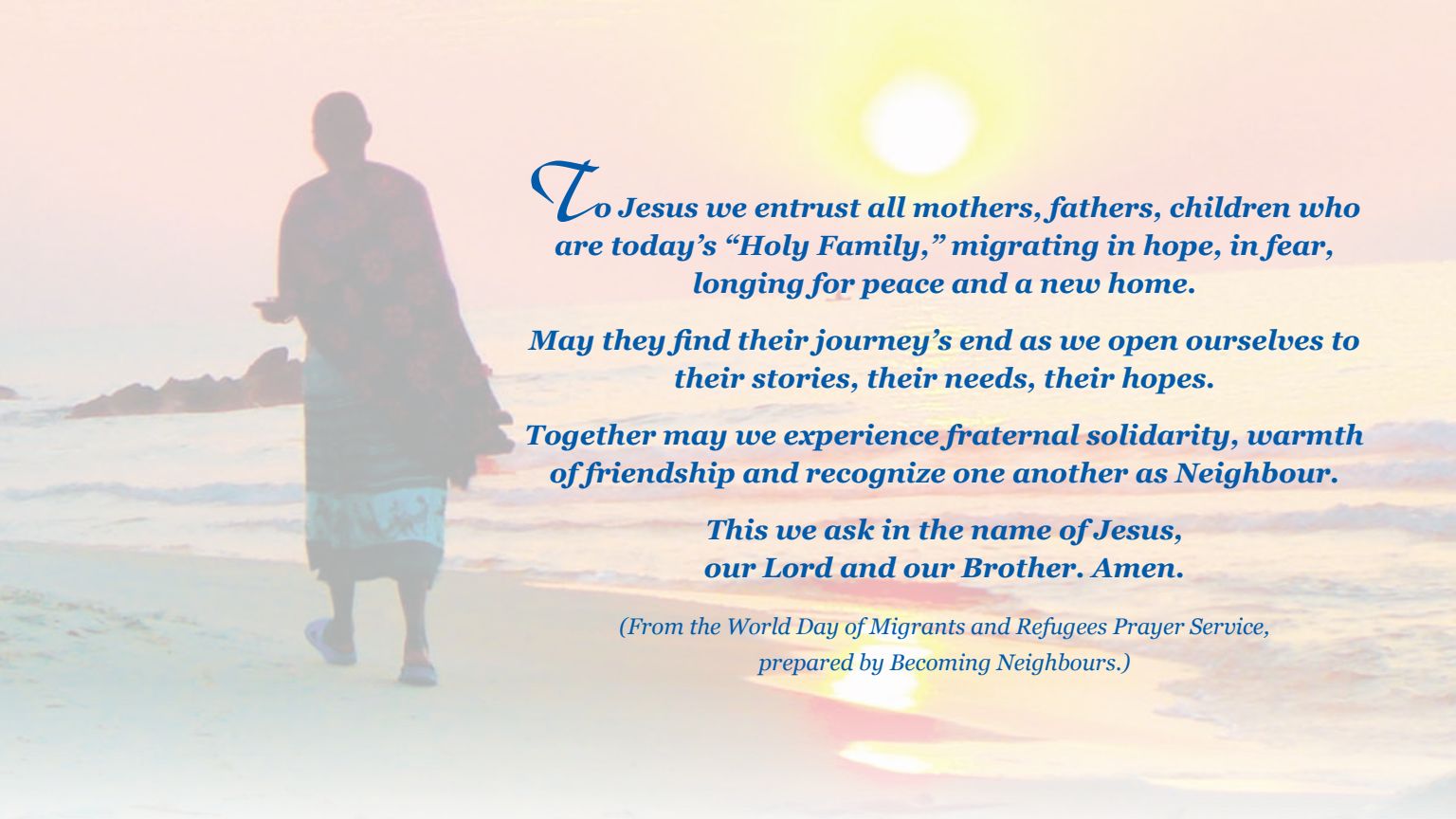
“I have opened my doors to the traveller.” (*Job 31-32*)



Priest candidate Luis Lopez (third from right) and his mother and family when he made his first oath of commitment with Scarboro in 2012. Luis's parents and siblings immigrated from El Salvador in the mid-1980s.



Friends of Becoming Neighbours (L-R): Johana Coronado, recipient of the 2013 Annual Sister Margaret Myatt, CSJ, Recognition Award in honour of her long standing contribution to the ministry of Becoming Neighbours; Angelica Lopez and her daughter Lizeth, members of the Becoming Neighbours Latina Women's Circle. Lizeth's prayer partner is Our Lady's Missionary Sister Mona Kelly; Yessica Guzman and Marisol Canas, lay missionaries with the PME missionary society, who are living at Scarboro Missions while studying English.



To Jesus we entrust all mothers, fathers, children who are today's "Holy Family," migrating in hope, in fear, longing for peace and a new home.

May they find their journey's end as we open ourselves to their stories, their needs, their hopes.

Together may we experience fraternal solidarity, warmth of friendship and recognize one another as Neighbour.

This we ask in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Brother. Amen.

(From the World Day of Migrants and Refugees Prayer Service, prepared by Becoming Neighbours.)

“Never lose the hope that you too are facing a more secure future, that on your journey you will encounter an outstretched hand, and that you can experience fraternal solidarity and the warmth of friendship!”

From the message of Pope Francis for the 2014 World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees, January 16, 2014

group who early last summer received a negative response to their refugee claim. They had to leave Canada. In the time leading to their departure I continued to accompany them in their journey. I was invited to eat and share my life with them and we became quite close.

After leaving Canada in July, the family was detained in the United States. The father and daughter were kept in detention centres for a few months; the mother was allowed to go free. Their situation left me feeling helpless and frustrated. However, the other families in our group never lost hope and despite the distance we learned to continue to accompany this family in their struggle for a better life.

Fortunately for this family they are now no longer detained and are trying to resolve their legal situation from the United States. Our support group is still in touch with them, sharing their journey, sharing in their tears and in their laughter. We write letters to the family and support them through prayer. As well, Becoming Neighbours and other agencies and groups have sent letters of support to officials on the family's behalf.

At heart, this ministry of accompaniment is like any other ministry, one of relationships. It is a call to share what I have and who I am with the stranger and the other—those who at first glance do not belong, but when we get to know them we realize that they

belong as much as we do.∞

Priest candidate Luis Lopez renewed his temporary oath with Scarboro Missions on December 6, 2013.

Scarboro Missions, along with 19 other religious congregations, helped to establish Becoming Neighbours. All are sponsoring members who participate in this companionship program through prayer, presence, and solidarity. Scarboro also provides office space at its Mission Centre for this important ministry.

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(Produced by Villagers Media Productions Inc.)

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PROGRAM TWO
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PROGRAM THREE
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PROGRAM FOUR
The Golden Rule



PROGRAM FIVE
Empowering the Poor



PROGRAM SIX
Mission Centre



PROGRAM SEVEN
Ways to Pray



PROGRAM EIGHT
Evangelized by the Poor



PROGRAM NINE
Social Justice / Eco Justice



PROGRAM TEN
Mission by Dialogue



PROGRAM ELEVEN
Option for the Poor



PROGRAM TWELVE
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