

WELCOME!

“Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)



Welcome to St. John the Compassionate Mission community. Christ is among us! Now and forever!

We are, like you, simple pilgrims. *Chronicles 29:15* Whether you are just visiting for the first time and planning to move on or wishing to see if this could be a spiritual home for you, we hope you feel welcome.

Please let us introduce ourselves. Our community at this time is not a parish or a monastery or a social service agency. We are canonically an Apostolate of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox church under the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Our bishop is Metropolitan Gregory. We recognize that canonical structures are necessary but they don't tell you all the story, any more than four walls can tell the story of a family that lives in them. So let us tell you a few more things that may help you better understand who we are.

Our community is inclusive of all people and at the same time desires to be faithful to the Tradition of the Orthodox church. "Tradition is the life of the Holy Spirit in the church" (*Vladimir Lossky*). And this includes also the Scriptures. *1 Tim 3:15* Each of us, aware also of our poverty, understands that it is in embracing and welcoming the stranger, the different, the other, the poor, that we welcome Christ at the center of our community. *Matthew 25*

In the rule of the mission, with the title "To Give a Beautiful Witness," you will find a more detailed description of the vision of this community.

This rule is not a set of regulations but an attempt to describe what is at the core of the particular way in which we are called to be an apostolate.

Some members of our community come for breakfast at 5 am after having spent the night outside. Other members come for daily prayer and live in obedience with the spiritual father here. Some come every day, some only once in a while.

We said that canonically we are an Apostolate, so what does that mean practically? As an apostolate we share in the apostolic work of the church. In the Nicene Creed we profess faith in the church as “one holy catholic and apostolic”. As an Apostolate, we witness to the apostolic nature of the church whose reason to exist is to extend through time and history the life of the Kingdom. *Matthew 11:5*

As an apostolate we are called to pursue, continue and expand what began with the apostles, the work of founding the church. *Ephesians 2:20* What is particular about this Apostolate is that we live this on the margins of society and even in some extend the institutional church. *2 Corinthians 5:14* We nonetheless believe that this places us with Christ at the very heart of the world and of the church understood as the communion of the saints. *Hebrews 12:1* We find ourselves at the margins, the peripheries of this world because of Jesus. *Mark 1:38; Hebrews 13:13; Luke 14:23*

A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open.

Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it. *Luke 15:11-32*

The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community; this is what it means for us to be an apostolate. The church is the body of Christ broken for the salvation of the world!
Patriarch Alexis I

This model of community is not new for the church. At the council of Nicea there is a canon reminding every bishop to establish Houses of Mercy (hospitality) for the stranger, the sick and the poor. St. Basil and many others before him and after him established what would be known as the “Basiliad communities” - cities that brought people together through poverty, need and prayer. At the center of these establishments was the church, where the Divine services were held. The same for us: the chapel dedicated to St. Silouan is the heart of our community. In the structure of this Apostolate are connected many initiatives...

St. John's Bakery, a place where people learn a trade.

The Thrift Store, where people find work and where we recycle and reuse the resources of our city.

In Scarborough we opened a few years ago a new outreach and a new mission church called Good Neighbors Drop-in and St Zoticos Orthodox Church..

In the summer many of us spend July and August at St. Mary of Egypt Refuge. During this time we conduct children's, families', and retreat camps. We also go there regularly for times of "desert" and communal retreats. Both at the Refuge and the Thrift Store we try to live out some of the "green teachings" of our Patriarch Bartolommeo.

Lourmel House is just a few minutes from the mission. It is the community house of the Brothers and Sisters of Mercy, men and women who desire to live full-time a life of prayer and service by making a renewable commitment of one year. The house also serves as a guest house for anyone visiting from out of town. It has its own Typicon ("rule"). Long-term guests as well as overnight visitors are expected to abide by the Typicon of the house.

During the week, Father Nicolaie leads reflections on the gospel of the coming Sunday, or on the Orthodox church or contemporary issues. These reflections are open to anyone interested. All questions comments are welcome. Sometimes we also celebrate baptism, marriages and lots of funerals. Last year we lost many of our community due to drug overdose.

St. Macrina Counseling Services provides faith-based professional counseling to couples and families and individuals. It has a joint project with the downtown local Catholic churches and us.

As you can see there are many aspects of life in the Apostolate.

We encourage you to ask questions and to purchase some of the books the Mission has published that describe the 35-year experience of this community.

You may not understand or even like what you find out but you cannot argue that it has been actually lived. We value the belief that it is more important to live something rather than just talk about it. We also try to pay attention to what is true and live out of this reality regardless of how it could be understood.

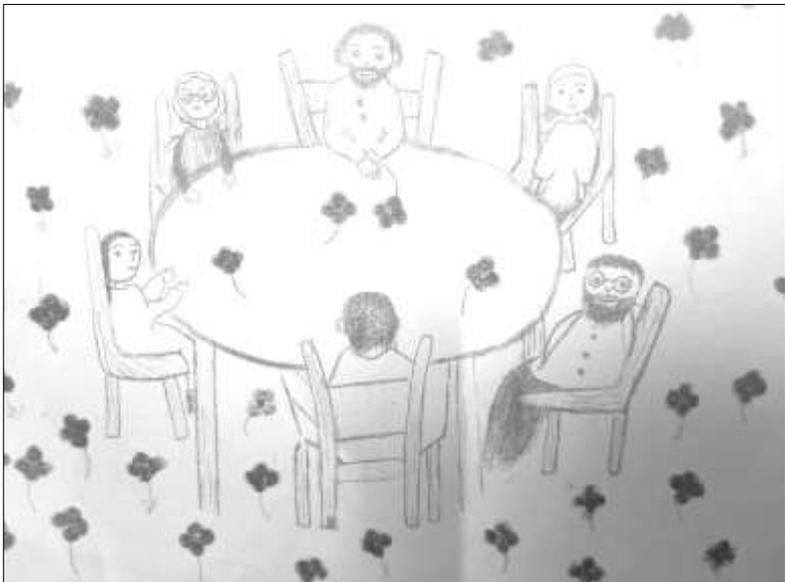
To conclude, if you are just passing through, we believe that no encounter is without mystery. *Patriarch Bartolommeo* And we pray that your next step on the journey of life may be also blessed because of your visit with us.

If you are curious and would like to explore whether this community could become your home, please talk to Father Nicolaie who is our spiritual father and priest. If this is not the place for you, he will help you to perhaps find one that is for better suited for you.

Central to our life is the celebration of divine liturgy and services, especially the feast days. We bring to God through the liturgy of the church the questions and sufferings and unanswered cries of the people that come to us. We greatly value silence; after each service we welcome you to stay in silence as a way to let in deeply what we have heard and lived. Silence makes a space in us to hear the Word of God. Silence also teaches us how to listen to each other.

Thank you for reading this.

Glory to God for all things!





ST. JOHN
THE COMPASSIONATE
MISSION

155 Broadview Avenue, Toronto M4M 2E9

416-466-1357

info@stjohnsmmission.org ~ www.stjohnsmmission.org