



ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER August 2016



The Holiness of the Poor



1986 – Agape and *Diakonia*...

By Fr Roberto Ubertino

It is with great joy that I take this opportunity to share with you, in the name of the Agape fellowship, the vision behind what we have come to call the St John the Compassionate Mission.

The project comes out of the realisation that an authentic Orthodox tradition can lead us to seek to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ radically in our times. We also have come to believe that this tradition has a unique contribution to make in the search to express the ever ancient and the ever-new dynamism of the Christian faith. Our fellowship has come to understand that Agape (divine love) is truly the source and foundation of our lives as redeemed people and that this love must pass through the lives of those who have put on Christ,

who have received the Spirit, out into the arena of sinful history. There it will essentially express itself as *diakonia*. We understand Agape as the desire to serve (*diakonia*) without the desire for reciprocation, and the willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation (*antistenai*). The opening of the St John the Compassionate Mission is an attempt to integrate in our own lives right here in the South Riverdale neighbourhood, the faith and spirituality of the Orthodox Church by reaching out to those who are estranged for the most part from any visible Christian community and from society at large - in brief, the "poor."

To reach out and serve the "poor" does not mean that we will automatically try to copy the existing structures of

social services, although these certainly have their place. Often, however, that is the only way the poor come in contact with the Church - as another agency "trying to help." As Christians, we are called to be the salt and light of the world.

Our response to need and pain in others must be particular: an expression, which stems from our discovery of the Gospel. We need to experiment, to pray and dare to find ways of actively living Agape and Diakonia, which are authentically Christian and not simply blindly copying the modes and ways of society. All our activity towards the world should be essentially in terms of evangelization. This does not mean that we are going to force everyone to become Christian or that our help will be limited only to those who show some interest in our beliefs - certainly not! Evangelization, rather, means performing all our actions and nurturing all our relationships in an attitude of total obedience to God so that, through the glass of water given out of love, the power of regeneration, the energies of Agape can flow out into the world and embrace both the giver and the receiver. Even though on a superficial level, one may appear to be doing exactly what the welfare office down the street is doing, the power which one works from as a Christian is very different. With time, we want to gently invite people to join us for prayer. Our experience has been that simple and poor people can very well receive Orthodox rites. We are going to try to simply be a presence at first and seek ways to reach out and serve, quietly and gently inviting people to come and share with us the beauty and the good news of Jesus Christ.



The Mission (by the way, we are not sure whether we will keep this name given the negative connotation it can have) will open January 31st, 1986. Our location will be the Blake Development - part of Ontario Housing. You can find it on the map north of Gerrard between Jones Avenue and Pape. We have rented a store right next to the local variety store. Since this is the only store for the whole neighbourhood, the area is well frequented. "The Blake," as the professionals know the area, is made up of two 14-storey high buildings and a maze of town houses. All the people who live there are on some kind of social assistance and this for some generations now. The neighbourhood is teeming with children. It has the reputation of being a "hard" neighbourhood - prostitution is an established phenomenon. Some say the area was a lot worse a few years ago. Nevertheless, just a few months ago, a pizza delivery boy was stabbed in front of the variety store.

In the beginning we would like to set up the front part of the store as an area of hospitality - a kind of drop-in - and serve coffee and donuts or hot soup. The Roman Catholic Parish of Holy Name (which Blake is in) receives many calls from the neighbourhood and would like us to help them in responding to them. We would also give out food and clothes in an informal way - depending on supply. Another area will be made into a chapel where we would pray (a lot!) both individually and as a community. We hope soon to start spending nights of prayer (e.g. Saturday vigil) especially to focus on intercession for the people at Blake. It is important to stress that we go there with an attitude of seeking to learn and be led in the direction that God wants us to go and that we really have no absolute sense about how things will turn out. The whole thing may appear to be a total waste of time or simply foolishness. There is a real possibility that we will never see any visible results, but as Fr. John Tataryan once said to us: "...that's O.K. God loves fools..." Also, do not our Liturgy, icons, constant murmuring of the name of Jesus push us to "see the invisible"?!



In terms of what we need at this time, one of our main difficulties is simply paying the rent... We are also in need of furniture, e.g. chairs, tables, carpets, plants, and radio - anything that can help us to create a home atmosphere. For the chapel, we have next to nothing; so any icons, bookstands, etc. would be greatly appreciated. Anyone with carpentry or sewing skills is also very welcome!

To conclude, the most important thing is our need for your prayer. We desire to remain open to what you may have to share with us in terms of both support and challenges!

In Jesus, the "foolish man from Galilee," whom we serve and adore as Lord and God, we remain...

The Holiness of the Poor – Peter

By Fr Roberto Ubertino

Peter Stire came to the Mission on Blake Street brought by a couple he had met at the Salvation Army downtown.

Peter lived both the Blake Street and Broadview realities of St John the Compassionate Mission. He decided to ask for Baptism during a retreat weekend the Mission held at Collingwood. This was a surprise for me to learn from Peter such a request, since he would mostly yawn during my talks. His mouth would open up as big as a horse and one time, exasperated, I put a shoe in it! The day Peter stepped into the baptismal font, he later said, it was so deep that he did not think his feet would ever touch the bottom.



His simplicity, self-effacing disposition, was disarming. Therefore he got away with his favourite routine of preaching to the bus drivers about his new love, Jesus Christ. He tried giving up smoking: he had left his cigarettes before he was baptized at the altar call during a Sally Ann revival meeting. After his baptism, he eventually took his back pack. I will never forget his look of dismay when, one day as he was smoking in front of the Mission, another, not-so-gentle preacher approached Peter out of the blue and promised him eternal damnation because he obviously did not know the Lord since he was a smoker.

There are enough stories about Peter that easily a book could be written, and I plan to do so. He had a very

simple, child-like faith, and I have personally witnessed how his prayer could work miracles. Like the day when he stopped the rain just long enough for us to bless the sea. Peter's holiness shone along with his human poverty and brokenness. I have a beautiful picture of him against the sun, shining and smiling at the camera. This picture for me is an icon of what the Lord speaks about in the Gospel, when he says that in the kingdom, we will all shine like the sun.

Peter never read or studied, but he could come up with deep theological insights, especially about the Mother of God. He loved her icon in our chapel, and to this day one can see how the gold of her robe has been worn out by his tender kisses. My last visit with Peter before he died was in the nursing home where he had been locked in the ward for mentally deranged seniors. Apparently, he had become aggressive because they told him he could not smoke. During the visit, he went to confession. His last words to me as I was leaving were: "Father, I have one great sadness. I have never been able to have tears for my many, many, many sins."

Shortly after his death, I had a dream where Peter came and helped me carry a cross up a hill. At his funeral, there were Roman Catholics of both rites, Orthodox, Salvation Army, and unbelievers of all sorts--and even Québécois who had come for him.

To this day, I feel Peter in a humble and quiet way works miracles among us. How else could you explain that the Mission is still open? His life really touched everyone he met. It helped me to understand how real holiness can exist alongside our own brokenness and poverty. In fact, it is those who are poor that best show us what holiness is. "Blessed are they who know that they are poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Yet Peter's life took its full potential and meaning and place in the Kingdom of Heaven because God drew him into the Church, and into the Church its life blossomed to its full potential and eventually its bright lustre.

Holy Father Peter, intercede for us!



Catherine

By Paul Cadros, PRIOR

Catherine came to St. John's a little over seven years ago, and became a familiar face in our community. Not only did she volunteer from time to time answering the phone, but she also became a member of our praying community. She lived for a period of time in one of our live-in community homes, enjoying and revelling in the relationships she made with many of the house's visitors and community members. She was known for stocking the home with rich foods, especially with any ice creamy delicacy she could get her hands on – always with the intention of having others eat and enjoy her offering. Catherine enjoyed playing host in her own quirky way to many of St. John's most notable visitors, even organizing and reaching out to Khouria Frederica Mathew-Green to have her visit and speak at St. John's.

In her better moments, Catherine had an insatiable thirst for discovery. It seemed like every week she would be off on a new quest, whether it was her passion for all things Simone Weil, searching out the city's newest coffee shop, supporting the indie film scene, enrolling in theology courses, or re-reading a ratty old copy of a favourite novel – Catherine was on the move. In addition to her hobbies, she was a people person, and she liked being where the action was. Catherine adopted particular people as family members, and spared almost literally no expense on them. Her antenna had always been on alert and ready to spot out injustice, especially to the poor and downtrodden. On one occasion, against the advice of her friends, she spent one freezing evening protesting corporate greed with the Occupy Toronto movement without any provisions for sleeping out doors. She didn't always make sense, often even to herself, but that was the way she preferred things.

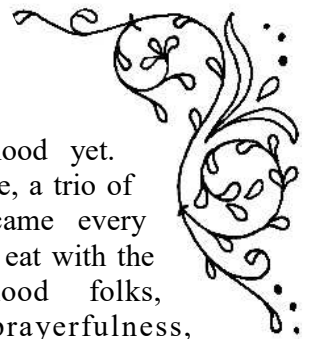
It is fair to describe her as one of the 'Masters' of St. John's. Her very existence possessed a prophetic quality, living so far beyond what many people describe as normal, that to enter into a relationship with her, even for just a moment, a person would have to be prepared to do away with the cruder parts of their inward looking selves. There was no place for ego, judgement, or a lack of patience around Catherine --that just wouldn't work. No. To have fully enjoyed the fruits of Catherine's friendship, a person would have to choose the road less travelled. A more humble path.

It's been a little over year since our sister Catherine Archer passed away. We miss her witty retorts, her warm, friendly greetings, her over-the-top generosity, as well, we remember with pain the personal difficulties she wore so obviously on her sleeve. Catherine had lived many lifetimes in her 56 years; through many trials, disappointments, and her own great share of relationships, broken and betrayed. She is buried in a plot not too far from St. Mary of Egypt Refuge, a place she loved. We pray every day for our sister Catherine, and we look forward to the day we can once again sit down on a rickety porch in the warmth of a summer night, shooting the breeze about this and that.



Fr Tom

By Mary Marrocco



Unlike some of our other St John's saints, Fr Tom is not exactly a hidden saint. His wake was a two-day party with people coming in from all over, giving performances and talks and meeting one another, and his funeral filled a large east-end church to overflowing. He'd served as pastor of large parishes and spent his life doing long-lasting work with all sorts of people. He was lively and fun, and had a deep, strong mind.

What's more hidden, though, is the life and new ministry he found as Grandfather to the Poor at St John's Mission, in the last years of his life.

He was retired and living in a downtown infirmary for priests when, by some chance or grace, we met. I knew of him but didn't really know him; that was about to change, to my everlasting gratitude. At that point, his speech was slowed and gait inhibited from the effects of a stroke. But his tall, strong frame was still imposing, his mind still incisive, heart rich and deep and gracious. And he was restless to be serving. He was a lover of the poor, lover of the layperson and the young person and the little one, a delighter in joy and beauty and people meeting each other and in sports (unofficial chaplain to the Blue Jays, as his wall photos attested) and social justice and, well, the Lord. There was only one Fr Tom (or Tommy, as he liked to be called) McKillop.

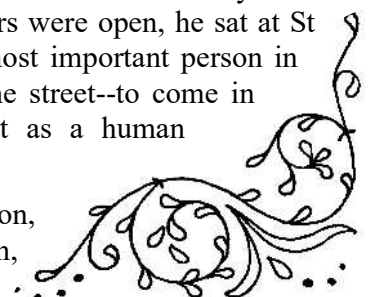
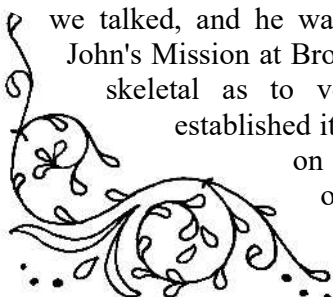
His pastoral side was on the alert from the first moment we talked, and he was eager and ready to help. St John's Mission at Broadview was, at the time, pretty skeletal as to volunteers--Toronto hadn't yet established its volunteer program for people on social assistance, we weren't officially part of Out of the Cold, and we hadn't been at Broadview long enough to be

really part of that neighbourhood yet. Fernando's strong steady presence, a trio of women (blood sisters) who came every Wednesday evening to cook and eat with the neighbourhood folks, Peter's prayerfulness, Angela's stalwart service--these were some of the pillars of the Mission then, strong but few. Most importantly, that year, the founder, Fr Roberto, was taking his first-ever (and still only) sabbatical, a whole year off the continent and out of touch, which was somewhat heart-stopping for us all. Certainly it was for me, left in charge of the Mission's life and management. And in that vulnerable moment, when all could have collapsed, this tall, broad-shouldered, baseball-playing priest, physically weakened, with an unweakened heart for the underdog and a love of the social Gospel--Fr Tom--walked right in and claimed his place.

I loved Fr Tom for not "doing" much, and not worrying about "doing" much. He was there. He was there from start to finish every day we were open that year, sitting in the refectory, eating, drinking coffee, talking with the folks, listening, listening, not judging, listening, blessing us by his being and his presence and his unshakable, unbreakable conduit to God's love. This was a man who'd walked with the likes of Viktor

Frankl and John Howard Griffin. He'd founded Youth Corps, a well-established ministry for youth which served the Toronto area for years. He'd received the Order of Canada. Not that he talked about any of that. And now, every day its doors were open, he sat at St John's and waited for the most important person in the world--the person off the street--to come in and be welcomed and met as a human being and child of God.

The people of the Mission, especially the homeless men,



loved him right off. So many had lost or become disconnected from their fathers and grandfathers, sons and brothers, not to mention their own fatherhood, and here was a holy, playful, priestly grandfather-Father. He loved them back, without preference or judgement, and treasured his time there.

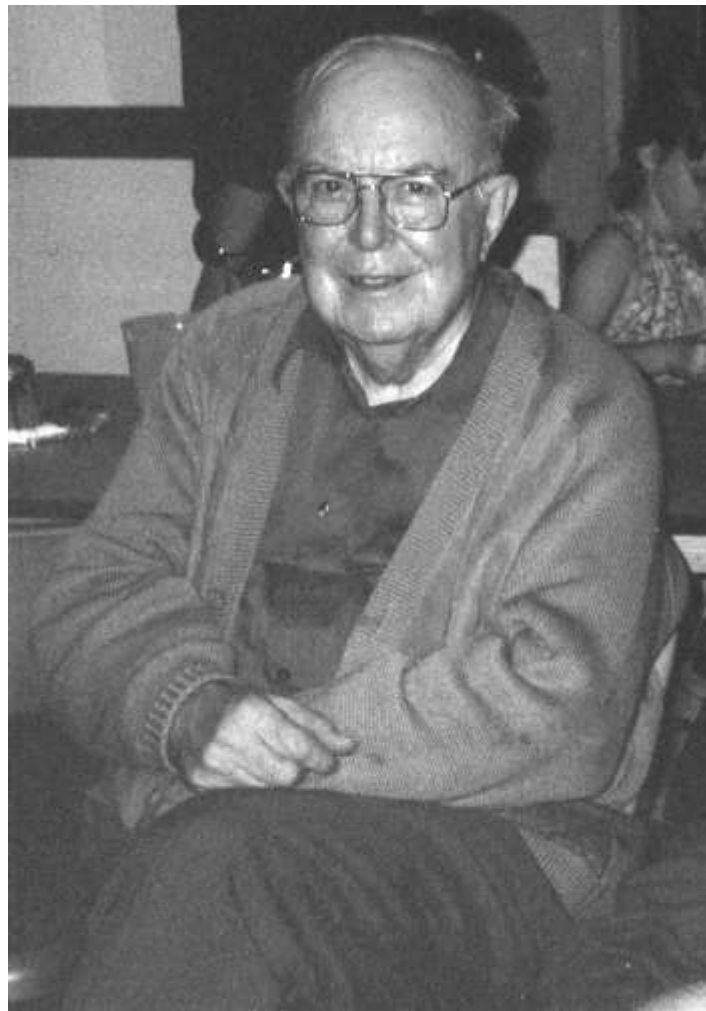
He also loved the liturgical life, this man who'd served as a Roman Catholic priest for more than thirty years. He was introduced to Orthodox morning and evening prayer, to the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete and to the story of Mary of Egypt. Who could be unmoved by watching him, with great care and suffering, lower his six foot four inch frame to the ground for full prostrations, over and over. He dedicated himself to the Jesus Prayer. He prayed for and carried each person there. He asked if he could be buried with a chotke in his hands.

Many people who would never otherwise have found the Mission came there because Fr Tom was there: people of all backgrounds, people who knew him or knew of him, people who simply were drawn by who he was.

Later, Fr Tom became more enfeebled, moved to a home with a higher level of care but farther away, and was unable to come to the Mission. Some of us came to him, visiting him at the Houses of Providence where he spent his last years. How could we not? We couldn't live without seeing and visiting him, if we had any choice about it. He never forgot the people who captured his heart, from Dave Stieb (ace pitcher for the Toronto Blue Jays) to Bill who was a regular at the Mission while Fr Tom was. To the end of his 84 years, he wrote poetry about what he'd witnessed and lived.

These things were visible to the eye, and made it tough for any heart in his presence to remain of stone. Less readily evident was his deep prayerfulness. That, perhaps, more than anything, even more than his down-to-earth love of people and of sports, made him the glue that so clearly held the Mission together during that extra-vulnerable year and the years after when he still could come.

Of all the Fr Tom stories I could tell, the one most moving to me happened in the length of time it took to speak one sentence. It changed my heart forever, and gave me a gift without which I could not have done the work that has since been given to me. I had heard news of a high-ranking cleric who'd made a decision that would have far-reaching negative consequences for St John's -- without consulting or speaking with any of us. Inflamed, I instantly made ready to set out and, in person, give that clergyman a hot piece of my mind. Fr Tom saw it coming, and (initially) irked me by putting a hand on my shoulder and asking me to sit down a moment in the office. Even so, I knew enough to obey. He told me,



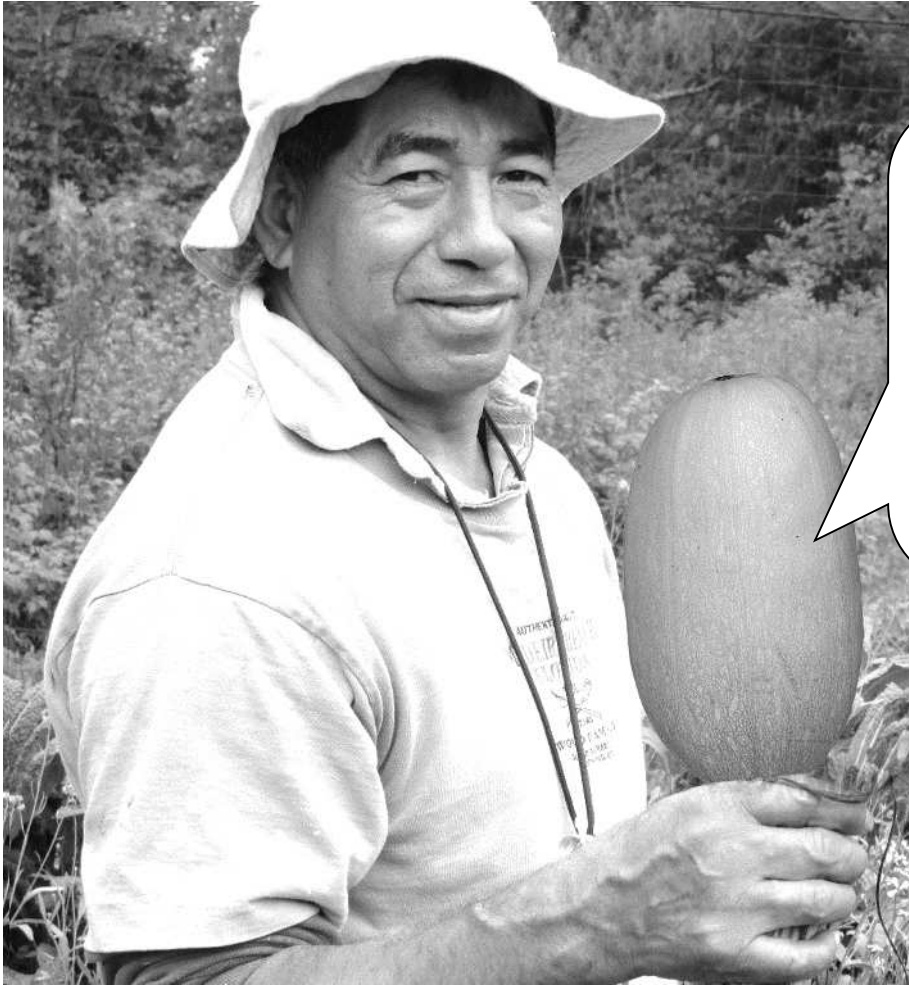
quietly, that I did not know what that person had actually said or done, what he meant to say or do, and that I had better start by listening and praying. I don't know if anybody else in the world, not even my father, could have caught me and altered my path that day. Not only did it have immediate good effect, but it also taught me a way of being and acting that has steadily guided me ever since.

Fr Tom was born into this world on January 30, 1928, and left it for eternal life on February 15, 2012, just after his 84th birthday. When I pray to him, I ask him for the grace to listen and rejoice in others, especially the outcast, the old, and the young.

Holy Father Tom, pray for us!



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Julio's Amazing
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6:00pm Thursday September 29th, 2016

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Guest Speaker: Mary Jo Leddy

Mary Jo is the Founder of Romero House and is active in human rights issues and the peace movement. She is a writer, a teacher, and an advocate for many. She is also a recipient of the Order of Canada. Mary Jo has published a number of books, several of which feature or reflect on the work and life of Romero House. She is also renowned for her creative use of leftovers in making delicious meals, and her dedication to her neighbourhood.

Please R.S.V.P. by September 24th, 2016

Leave message: 416-466-1357 ext: 44 or e-mail: info@stjohnsmmission.org

Helen

By DARY DARROCCO

Helen is one whose life in God we really came to understand only after her death.

I happen to have been the last person to see her alive. She'd been in hospital for some time, and when I came in she was alone, breathing painfully. As I stood by her bed, it came over me like a thunderclap that a sign said "Nothing by mouth" but she had no tubes of any kind. I went out to ask a nurse to get the doctor for me, and when I came back a moment later, there was no more breath. When the doctor finally came, he stood silently, looking at her and then at me across her body. "Did you send for me?" he asked. "Yes, I wanted to ask why she is being allowed to die of dehydration, but you see she has died." He said he had just arrived on duty and had never met her before, confirmed her death, and departed. "Out and over," as Helen used to say at the end of every conversation. Shortly afterward the chaplain came to the door, looked at me, asked if I was okay, and left. Then the nurse came in, gently held the lifeless hands, drew the curtains around us, and prayed for Helen.

Helen was a regular at the Blake Street St John's from its very beginning. Fr Roberto first spotted her bent-over, digging through a flower box at the front of St John's, looking for pennies. The two of them eyeballed each other. It was like meeting in the garden of the Resurrection. And it was instant love: she never forgot that moment, and she never left the place. She became a fixture, sitting by the door of the Chapel, or sitting on a bench folding laundry (her own special task and place in the community) and welcoming newcomers and familiar faces alike.

When she came to the Mission, she was poor, she was alone. She spoke so softly that you had to bend down near her to hear, and since her speech was somewhat

garbled, she sounded like a bird chirping. She was easily overlooked. She craved human companionship, but was unable to articulate her immense pain. We eventually realized that her mind had broken because of her family experiences and from excess of grief. This became clear when she fell and was taken--for the last time, as it



turned out--to hospital, and Paul offered to go into her apartment and feed her birds. She lived alone (with the birds) in "the Blake," the subsidized apartment block which brought St John's to Blake Street. The state of her place was clear evidence that she was no longer sane. With the help of Fernando, we spent several excruciating days restoring it to order--which made us feel better, though she herself never saw it again.

At one of our retreats in Collingwood, Pierrette spent time with her, and was able to hear her speak about the horrors of her life, and write her story. We'd wondered, at times, how a woman with ten children could be so alone. That day in Collingwood, Pierrette learned that, little by little, all Helen's children had been taken away by Children's

Aid. She heard stories like the day Helen's husband tried to poison their children's school sandwiches by lacing them with rat poison, and that another day, he bent some of her fingers back until they broke. We saw that Helen had simply decided, at some point, the only way to survive was to depart from sanity.

"Hanging in," was her response if you asked her how she was, and that was a pretty accurate description.

The holiness of Helen is not just that she went through horrors and yet somehow retained a purity and sweetness, not even just that she was a living fountain of grief for her children, but that when she came to the Mission, she was instinctively drawn to the Chalice. She would come up for the Chalice and insist on receiving communion. It might have looked as though she was just a poor woman

coming to St John's for distraction and for the community meals. But for her, St John's was her church; intuitively she believed that this was the Church and she came there because it was the Church. She couldn't put it into words, but she was drawn to the Church and the Eucharist.

To the Church she brought the pain of her life that made her lose her sanity. The long hours she would spend, just sitting and keeping watch by the doors of the church, were her "place" there, and her teaching for us.

Only after many, many years among us did she trust us enough to show us, one day at Broadview, her feet. Those feet gave her acute pain which she kept to herself as long as she could. When she finally let us sit her down and take off her shoes and socks, the student nurse's mouth dropped open when she beheld Helen's feet.

During liturgy, she held the Gospel Book as though it

was Christ himself. At that moment, her place in the community was most exemplified and liturgized, because she was the one who held the Gospel while it was being read. She was the perfect height: she didn't need to bend over, but stood straight with the Book resting on her head. So her littleness gave glory to God because she could hold the Gospel at the right height.

Helen had a keen sense of hospitality; she loved to bake, and would rarely come to the Mission without bringing her latest batch of muffins. Once we'd seen her apartment, we had some idea of what it cost her to bake them. And her true sense of hospitality was revealed in that final hospital stay, during her expedited dying, when she drew the women of the Mission around her. They spontaneously kept vigil with her, becoming in those last days the women at the cross, the myrrh-bearing women.



The Holiness of the Poor - Carol Anne

By Fr Roberto Ubertino

Often we hear in the Church how we are to convert the poor, evangelize the poor. What I have learned is that the poor also evangelize the Church.

Carol Anne was one of those people who opened my heart to Christ in a way that has deeply marked my life. She suffered from severe mental illness. In one of her lucid moments, she shared with me the story of her first personal encounter with God as a young girl on a boat near Vancouver. In a real way, the hand of God did rest on Carol Anne.

One of those deep exchanges took place one day when I was hiding in the chapel burdened by many doubts and sorrows. Carol Anne walked into the chapel, went straight to the icon of Christ and began to pray out loud in the empty chapel. She eventually also prayed for me, naming those things that burdened my heart at that moment. On her way out, she turned to me and said: "Fr Roberto, remember Christ is risen!" It was July! It reminded me of St Seraphim's prophecy that they would sing "Christ is Risen" in July. To this day, I can't say or hear Christ is Risen without remembering Carol Anne.

Eventually, the illness that was oppressing her mind took her life. She escaped from the hospital where she had been locked up and jumped off the Bloor St bridge. Holiness and deep human brokenness, this is the witness of the Church at St John's. Also, evangelization is not just a one-way effort. To evangelize, you must also be open to be evangelized by the poor.



Why Do You Look For The Dead Among The Living?

By Fr On Daniel Ducha

If you were to go into the office on the main floor of the Mission one of the first things you would notice is that one wall is covered with photographs. This wall is in some ways the story of the Mission itself. The photographs are of those who, no longer alive, are still part of the community here. The photographs span almost 30 years of Mission life. 30 years – no great time in human history but a decent time in a human life nevertheless.

Each person is precisely that – a **person** with a name. A person whose life for a shorter, or longer, period of time included being a member of the community here. Some of them were even buried from St John's – sometimes at the request of their families and some because they had no families to arrange their funerals. Almost all of them had someone from the Mission at their funeral. Each of them had a personal relationship with the community here. In an age when things happen quickly and immediate results are all too often sought the wall speaks of the importance of stability. Of the importance of just being there – not for a weekend, or a week, but year after year after year. You may delude yourself into thinking that short is enough but you cannot and you don't build relationships in the short term.

Take Jay, for example – a large jovial guy always cracking jokes who was found dead in his apartment following a seizure and whose funeral was held here. He was not the first member of his family to be buried from here – both his parents and his sister were also. You don't “earn” such a relationship except over years of stability. Jay would probably have had a chuckle at the comment of the funeral director who said, as the pallbearers trod gingerly over the frozen icy snow towards his grave, “hope they get a move on I'm worried the bottom might drop out of the casket”. He was a big guy after all. If you hadn't known Jay's sense of humour this might have seemed a callous remark but somehow it was fitting.

Or Kathy whose life had been almost destroyed by drugs but who came day after day to the winter breakfast

program because she was accepted here and people turned a blind eye to her repeated requests for winter clothing. She probably sold them for drugs but here, despite outward appearances, she was seen as a person. She was murdered, knifed to death in the street, another victim of a disordered life; another crime statistic but here she was a person but only seen as such because people had taken time over the years to see the person underneath the addict.

We have a saying here that we don't let a little thing like death spoil a good relationship. Each of those on the wall are commemorated by name at each Liturgy; the departed along with the living. One community unseparated by death.



Please remember the Mission in your will.

You can't take it with you!

Memorial Dinners offered in Memory of a loved one.



The Holiness of the Poor - Edna

By Fr Roberto Ubertino

There is a photograph of Edna in the Scarborough mission sitting in the chapel (at Broadview) with light streaming down on her. It reveals her deep soul but her life was anything but peaceful or easy. Edna's history at St John's was a very long one, one that continued for many years with true friends that carried her until her last breath. Edna left home at 14 preferring the safety of the Toronto streets to her home in the north of Ontario. She could not remember how many times she had been in jail and learned to drink melted down vinyl LP's when there was no alcohol. Married to a committed alcoholic she remained faithful to him till he died.



On one Holy Wednesday she made a vow in the chapel to stop drinking and never took another drink for the rest of her life. She had enormous will-power and inner life that would sustain her in a hospital bed for months with no food or drink, no TV or video yet smiling whenever I would visit her.

At the Mission she was always larger than life – loud, generous, she loved to laugh or start a fight if necessary! There were many sides to this incredible woman, however one that for me

touches the core of her soul took place early on in our friendship on Blake Street. One day, after vespers, I found Edna in the kitchen screaming with a knife in her hand wanting to kill herself. Over the next several hours I learned about her story of sexual abuse and violence. Her body and soul broken at an early age. Anger, rage, hurt at her present relationship was breaking her heart. After a while, and some silence, I asked her to pray. She refused. After more time passed I asked her again. Again she refused, saying she never prayed – she was United Church after all! After some more silence she began to pray. “Lord...” I expected words of sorrow, of rage towards others, towards God, but instead she said, “Lord, thank you!”. And she listed the names of all the people who had shown her love at the Mission. It was at that moment that I felt that this woman was being taught by the Holy Spirit the exact prayer to say that would heal her wounds. Who else can teach us how to pray?

Edna combined both a harshness, it is true, that concealed a child-like quality that I believe opened heaven to her. I was told that her last words were, “Father! I am sorry.” Many people continue to remember Edna both at the Mission and in our neighbourhood.

Holy Mother Edna pray for us.



The Mission is experiencing a need for the following items, if there is any way you can help us we pray that God may richly reward and bless you.

Urgent Needs:

- Milk (fresh, powdered), Coffee, Juice
- Eggs and margarine
- Fresh potatoes, onions, carrots,, apples, oranges
- Herbs and spices and pepper and sea salt

- Dried beans and lentils
- Diced tomatoes
- Canned meat, fish, beans, soup, vegetables, fruit
- Aluminium foil (large size)
- Ajax/comet, Laundry soap, Dish soap
- Oven Mitts (heavy duty)
- Peanut Butter & Jam

The people of St John's

St John the Compassionate Mission

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