



ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER 25th Christmas 2011

What is that?

The Nativity season is often bitter-sweet for some. With all the human suffering that takes place, some will ask where God is during these times. What we fail to realize is that God's response to human suffering is that He becomes vulnerable for us so that we can turn to Him. Living out this Nativity season through Christ is showing true compassion to others. By listening to us, God shows what He expects from us. How does He expect us to do this though?

Upon the conclusion of Fr. Thomas Hopko's recent visit to St. John's Mission, I had the pleasure of driving him to the airport. As we made our way along the 401, we discovered that we had both attended the same university. Though it was 30+ years between the times each had attended, we both reminisced about our positive experience; attending an institution that exhibited a sincere willingness to listen to its students. He reminded me that the university was not unlike the Mission. Aside from showing concern for our fellow brothers and sisters, he reminded me of the importance to listen. Listening requires us to focus our attention on the larger picture of the person as a whole, in his or her living relationship with God and neighbour. We must listen to the total person by being empathetic and willing to set aside our own preoccupations. By attending to our neighbour's need, we try to create a bridge of understanding. The result is a deeper connection with others so that they might bring themselves before God.

As I said farewell to Fr. Tom and made my journey home, I reflected on what Fr. Tom had alluded to and recalled that God demonstrates his love for us by listening to us when we pray; hence we should do the same for others.

I once saw a video clip about an elderly man and his middle-aged son. The son is reading his newspaper. The

father asks the son "what is that?" The son looks up and replies "it's a sparrow." A few seconds later the father asks again "what is that?" The son again looking up responds, "I just told you, it's a sparrow." The father again asks, "what is that?" The son responds angrily "A SPARROW! A SPARROW! S-P-A-R-R-O-W!" The father again asks, "what is that?" The son becomes irate shouting, "WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? I TOLD YOU SO MANY TIMES IT'S A SPARROW! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?"



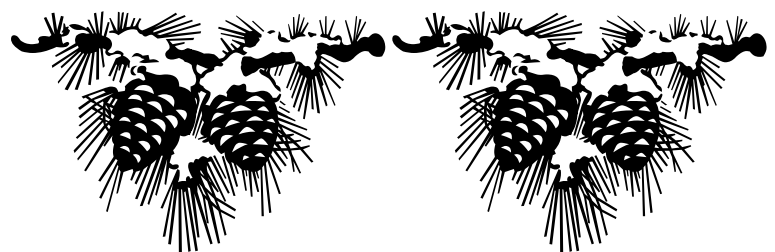
CHRISTMAS - "In Christ we see that only God is truly Human"

Without any emotion, the old man suddenly rises from the bench, goes into his house and returns a few moments later with a notebook. Handing it to his son, pointing to a specific page, he tells his son to read it aloud.

The son reads: "Today my youngest son, who a few days ago turned 3, was sitting with me in the park when a sparrow sat in front of us. My son asked me 21 times what it was and I answered all 21 times that it was a sparrow. I hugged him every single time he asked me the same question, again and again, without getting angry, feeling affection for my innocent little boy."

Let us remember this Nativity season that THIS is what God asks of us. Each time we listen to someone, regardless of how many times we may be asked "what is that?" over and over again, we are expected to answer with compassion and love. Let us be our Father's example.

S-Dn Theodore



Food for Families Update

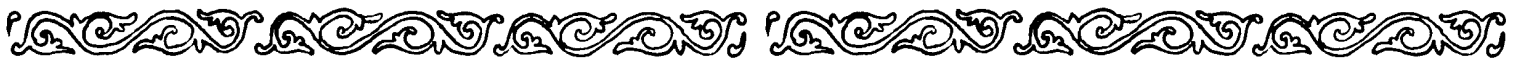
Since March 2010, every Wednesday, mothers, fathers, grandparents and children from various neighbourhoods in the community participate in our Food for Families Program at the Mission. This program was created to help offset the challenge of insufficient nutrition and the stresses of feeding children on a meagre budget that many of our families face.

Although one of the Food for Families program's objectives is to provide access to excellent and nutritious food, the program truly aims to get to know the families a part of our community and how to best serve them. Families are welcomed to enjoy some conversation and tea throughout the afternoon, as well as to speak to our outreach workers about more personal matters if needed. A sit down dinner at 5pm Wednesday evening is also organized for those families who wish to stay.

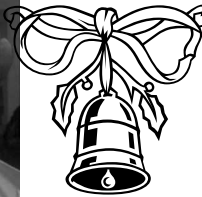
Since its humble beginnings, the program has grown tremendously; presently serving over 190 families in need. The program also welcomes new families with dependent children under the age of 18. Please call 416-466-1357 ext .29 or come in during program hours (Wednesdays 1-4pm) to register.

The Food for Families program is always in need and appreciate any donations of grocery vouchers, food stuffs, baby supplies and diapers. Thank you.

Ashley Grzybowski, Coordinator



Tom in his summer outfit



Bishop Tikhon from the USA visiting the Mission 13/10/2011



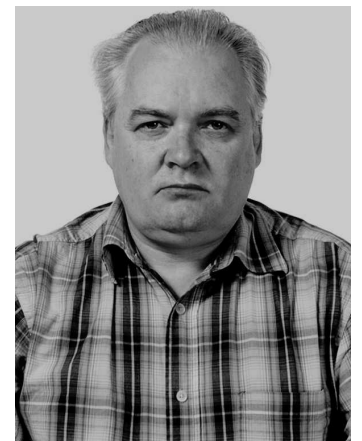
Gregory receiving outstanding volunteer award for 2011

A Reflection "Can a human being change?"

To change the world perhaps we should change ourselves first. Can we do it at all? Can a human being change? One must have asked oneself, I'm quite sure, whether one changes at all. I know that outward circumstances change; we marry, divorce, have children; there is death, a better job, the pressure of new inventions, and so on. Outwardly there is a tremendous revolution going on in cybernetics and automation. One must have asked oneself whether it is at all possible for one to change at all, not in relation to outward events, not a change that is a mere repetition or a modified continuity, but a radical revolution, a total mutation of the mind. When one realizes, as one must have noticed within oneself, that actually one doesn't change, one gets terribly depressed, or one escapes from oneself. So the inevitable question arises: can there be change at all? We go back to a period when we were young, and that comes back to us again. Is there change at all in human beings? Have you changed at all? Perhaps there has been a modification on the periphery, but deeply, radically, have you changed? Perhaps we do not want to change because we are fairly comfortable.

I want to change. I see that I am terribly unhappy, depressed, ugly, violent, with an occasional flash of something other than the mere result of a motive; and I exercise my will to do something about it. I say I must be different, I must drop this habit, that habit; I must think differently; I must act in a different way; I must be more this and less that. One makes a tremendous effort and at the end of it one is still shoddy, depressed, ugly, brutal, without any sense of quality. So one then asks oneself if there is change at all. Can a human being change?

James Kwasniewski, is a regular volunteer



It's all about the people!

Being at the Mission these last 4 years has given me the opportunity to meet with many fascinating people. One such individual is our volunteer Cynthia. Over a cup of tea on a Friday afternoon, she and I spoke about the Mission.

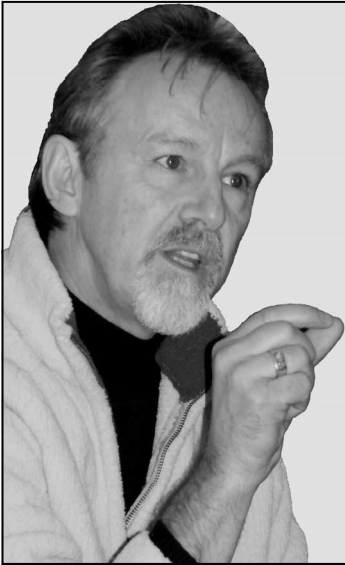
Cynthia began by telling me briefly that she has been a local resident of Riverdale for the last 43 years. She has been a member of the Mission community for the last 4-5 years and a volunteer here for the last 3 years.

Cynthia is usually at the Mission 5 days/week helping with the Breakfast Program. She enjoys her interaction with others and the informal atmosphere lends a change from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. With a cup of hot coffee, a game of cards, and a good laugh Cynthia enjoys her work and the people of the Mission.

When I asked her what it is about the Mission that keeps her coming, Cynthia replies "It's simple. It's the people that keep me coming back. It's all about the people. I just love being around them and helping them. By helping them, I help myself too."

I finally asked Cynthia what is the one thing that stands out about the Mission. Her response? "Nobody comes here by accident and you'll never know who will walk through those doors!"

S-Dn Theodore



Luc Lafond (left) led the team from St John's & St Silouan's that built St Luke's Cabin. He spoke about how it is important **not** to wait until you retire to start making a difference in this world. The blessing of St Luke's Cabin at St Mary of Egypt Refuge (Tweed) Nov 5, 2011 (right).

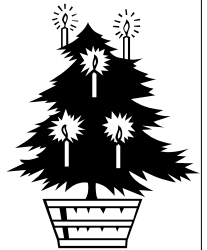


Urgent Needs List

- Pancake Syrup
- Cereal
- Peanut Butter, Jam
- Snack Bars
- Coffee, Tea, Juice
- Margarine
- Sugar
- Beans, Canned, Dried
- Fresh Potatoes, Carrots
- Canned Soup, Vegetables
- **Laundry Soap**
- Canned Meat, Fish
- Canned Tomatoes
- Socks
- Baby Food, Formula

*Please remember the Mission in your will.
You can't take it with you!*

*Memorial Dinners offered in Memory of a
loved one. Call—Deacon Pawel*



Kidz Klub

Kidz Klub at St. John the Compassionate Mission, has, through the dedication and help of many, grown tremendously since February. Having started with a small team of two or three mission members trotting through the cold Canadian winter visiting homes and inviting children to our club, we have now formed relationship with over 80 children and their families!

We provide many different activities for the children of Riverdale, to whom our doors are always open. Children participate in opportunities that encourage a love of learning and experiencing our world from a different perspective, in order to contribute to these children's growth to becoming all that they can be. This outreach mission continues to grow because of the dedicated volunteers who return week after week because of their positive experiences.

Every Saturday the program begins with a few volunteers knocking door to door and inviting all children grades two to seven to attend Kidz Klub. We then bring the children to the St. John the Compassionate mission or to a park nearby where the group participates in various activities from science experiments to extraordinary crafts with ordinary supplies. These activities not only leave the children with a smile on their faces, but also expose the children to many different educational disciplines, without them even realizing it. At the end of the program we walk the children back to their homes encourage them to come again, and wish them a great week.

Kidz Klub has, and will continue to, give these children the ability to grow together in independence, skills, and love.

Mary Malaty, Coordinator

St John's Bakery – A Year to be Proud

The year of 2011 has been very uplifting for St John's Bakery in many respects. Many faces have changed throughout the year and the future is brighter than ever. New clients, great Summer Markets, staff members taking extreme pride in their work are just a few of the positives I could mention. That being said, I would like to talk about what makes me most proud to be a part of St John's Bakery in the year 2011; the inclusion of our growing number of staff members with Special Needs.

One of my brothers as a child was told he would not get past grade eight. I remember the pain and frustration he went through. Yes, he did have brain damage from complications at birth, but my mother refused to believe he could not go any further than what the professionals had predicted. Well, after years of my mother believing in him and also integrating him with programs such as those St John's Bakery provides, he went on to get his Masters in Psychology at Brock University. Obviously, this is not going to be true of everyone, but seeing the transformation of our Special Needs Bakers, reminds me of what is possible when you provide a person with a sense of purpose, dignity and respect. St John's Bakery can be proud of many things, but this is truly at the top of the list for me.

I have to commend our Staff who have mentored the new additions to our family. It is with their help and dedication, this has become possible.

Shawn Burk – Bakery Administrator



Fr Roberto, Pres Maria Drossos
Fr Thomas Hopko
St John's 25th
Nov 11, 2011 (left)



Khouria Frederica
Mathewes-Green
Spoke about
"Beauty and the Liturgy"
25th Donor's Dinner



St. John's Academy Update

St. John's Academy has been very busy this term with many new students, and new volunteer tutors, engaged in Math and English tutoring every week. It is very inspiring to see our tutors sharing their knowledge and expertise with the students.

Students tell me that the tutoring at St. John's has given them the skills and confidence to participate more actively in classroom situations. Research shows that this individual attention, from a caring and knowledgeable adult, can make a huge difference in a child's life. The learning needs to occur regularly, so we emphasize to students, that attendance is crucial.

As we get ready to prepare for the Festive Christmas Season, it is a good time to reflect on the importance of community involvement. The Academy is playing an important positive role by providing a forum for interaction among students, parents and tutors. It takes a village to raise a well-rounded individual, and we have an opportunity to help shape the future of a struggling student, by simply giving them our time, attention and guidance. This is the spirit of Christmas that can inspire us to reach out and participate in a more active way, with our community members.

I look forward to working with all the students, parents and tutors for the remainder of the year, and wish everyone a very happy holiday.

Bodh Saraswati, Director



St John the Compassionate Mission

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