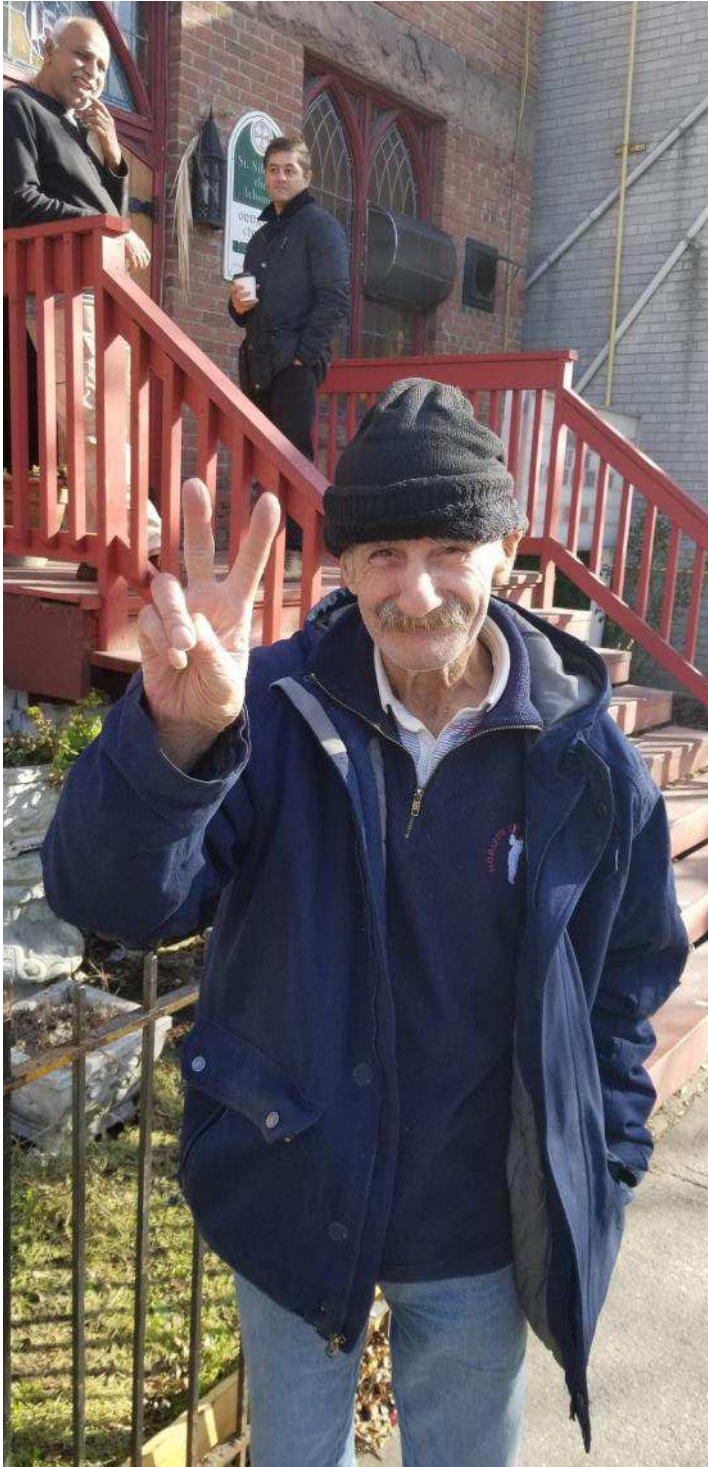




ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER Christmas 2017

Gifts Can Still Be Beautiful



Alice came to the Mission three years ago. She spent almost all the whole summer with us. Last week she came back with a gift. A beautiful colorful blanket that she made herself from used clothes.

She started to make these blankets when two people from her family were helped by professionals to commit suicide - as a result of the new law. She did not know what to say. What can one say anyway? But then she decided not to remain silence and to make these blankets. By the way, they are really beautiful and warm because she makes them well. To make them and donate them to hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and other places where human suffering remains unattended. She has made 25 so far. It is a way for her not to remain indifferent and to witness to what happens when people forget themselves, forget about each, other forget they are alive. She makes them in two sizes. The large one is really warm, made from old winter coats, mostly wool. The smaller ones are the right size for those who might use a wheelchair. These are also sewed by hand. She hopes that people might notice that another person touched them and worked on them by hand. To touch from a distance

She did not save any lives. Even if she did, she would not know. We are hopeless and vulnerable when reality strikes us. We realize how we have become strangers to one another.

There is an immense increasing gulf between us, and this makes us vulnerable. But even though we seem not to be able to cross on the other side, Alice shows us how to touch each other from a distance, so we don't forget. She told us she can come any day to the Mission and teach us how to make them. Please let us know so we can ask her to come. She lives almost 300 km away.

But she will come and she will not be late...

New & Old Developments in Scarborough

Good Neighbours in Scarborough has been a great success these last two years. Real connections have happened between us the Mission and members of the neighbourhood. The children outreach is lively and well appreciated by the neighbourhood. Recently we attended the funeral of one of our regular members Theresa. It was moving to see how much her participation at Good Neighbours meant for the family and friends of the deceased Theresa.

This past August our neighbours heard of the closing of the Red Cross Scarborough Drop-in. For many in Scarborough this is a great loss not only in terms of social services but of community building. Encouraged by some neighbours, we approached the Red Cross to discuss if we could respond to this crisis. Speaking with one of the Red Cross Directors it became clear that the Mission had something to offer. The Director described our approach as a "breath of fresh air". We prayed a lot and talked among the Sobor and key members of Good Neighbours.

In October the Sobor at the Mission took an unanimous decision to move from where we are now to Markham & Eglinton. It is about eight minutes away. We are looking into renting a store front and to be open to a larger group of people, many of whom had relied on the Red Cross for assistance during the last fourteen years. As usual we don't have the means to do this, but it is in the very "Rule of the Mission"¹ that not having the means to do something is not a reason to begin work. Scarborough is a large area in the

GTA that is grossly underserved by social services. As of January 2018 we will be the first drop-in between Warden Woods and Pickering open to anyone in need. We are trying to see if the city and other people are willing to help us, but in the end our "help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" and yes as a bishop once reminded us, "we do know who butters our bread!"

It is with great anticipation and joy that we embrace on this new venture and really count on many of our present Good Neighbours members to help us in founding this new outreach. We

will close Good Neighbours on Danforth Road at the end of December 2017. We will continue our ministry of presence in 500 Dawes Road for the coming year, more information to come.

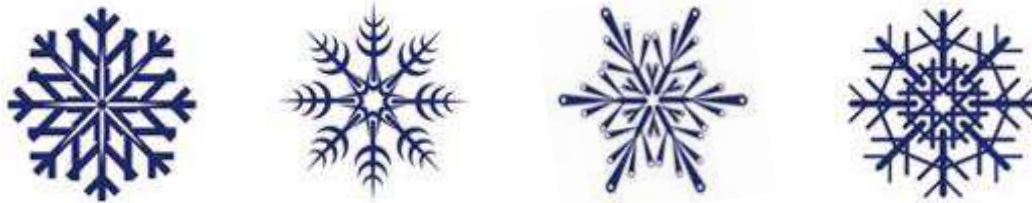
If you are interested in helping out we need lots of help from electricians, carpenters and plumbers. We need a sink, a stove and kitchen supplies.

Please come and visit us. The address will be made public in the next issue of the newsletter. For the time being you can reach us at info@stjohnsmision.org.

This Christmas we will begin to prepare a place where Christ will be welcome all throughout the year, in Scarborough.

FR

¹To Give a Witness - The Rule of St John's



Canada Revenue visits Mission!

This year Canada Revenue did a complete, total audit of all finances of the Mission, going back decades. It was a process that took over a month, with a team from the CRA at the Mission for almost a week. It was a very detailed search and Rudina rose to the task.

We passed with flying colours. We take great pride in making sure that every dollar we receive is properly accounted and used accordingly to the purpose it was given. Canada Revenue confirmed this for us. On leaving the team leader commented "the best auditing we ever had, and we got everything we asked for."

We are very proud of this success!

Congratulations Rudina



Appreciation Gala

Friday November 3rd, 2017



Dear Friends of St John's,

We are coming close to the end of 2017 and we want to let you know that we are grateful for all the support we have received in this past year and in all the preceding years. We have more work to do in 2018 and all of us here, including all the volunteers, are committed to continue what we did in 2017 and also to start new projects.

The new challenge for 2018, and for the years to come, is to extend our work in Scarborough, to build on what we have been doing for two years and to open the doors to more people. The Red Cross are closing their drop-in centre in Scarborough after 16 years - the main place in Scarborough where people could get a warm meal. We decided to move and relocate across the street from where Red Cross is leaving. It might be foolish for our small community to go there, but we really felt a deep call to undertake this project. With the infamous gentrification that is taking place in Toronto, the talents are buried these days in Scarborough and we don't want to be away from them.

At the Mission we will continue to serve more than 4000 meals a month, extending the breakfast program (5:00 am -9:00 am) to Saturdays. The Mission hours will remain the same, 7 days a week, with Wednesdays being the longest day of the week (5:00 am to 10:00 pm). We rely on the good work of the people who give us their time and energy and to those who come through these doors (600 volunteering hours per week).

We will continue to offer free counselling hours and to support and build partnerships with agencies that subsidise this service, and to educate and guide youth who have a call and a vocation for this difficult ministry. Our work will be the same, reaching for 1000 counselling hours done by recognised professionals and creating a safe place where people can open their hearts to healing.

We will continue to be close to, to support and help those who are experiencing homelessness by developing housing connections and putting more work in our community housing (20 people lived at St Xenia and Lourmel House in 2017). In 2017 we also worked with refugees, people offering shelter, job training, a place to work and camps for their children in the summer. We built a partnership with Romero House in this aspect and we want to make it stronger.

Through St John's Bakery and Thrift Store more and more people received training and a place to work. Currently, all the people who are working in the Bakery, including the manager, were people who had never worked in a bakery before, learning everything from scratch at St John's. The new project within the Bakery is concerned with making available parts of the work done here to people who were never able to secure a job. It is not easy but we will not give up.

We did a lot of work with children and youth and we work hard to form future leaders for this challenging ministry. Between the Mission, Scarborough and the OWL Camps at St Mary of Egypt Refuge, more than 100 children attended and were cared for by people from our community.

Because of lack of space we will not speak about everything here, but if you want to know how the chickens from the Refuge are doing please read the next page. We were asked by people who support us to give the chickens a chance to tell their own story!

Fr Roberto, Fr Nicolaie

Dn Pavel, George

Paul, Naomi



I am a Chicken and I Care

I don't remember how it started , but it did. I don't have memories, what I remember though was that I've never been alone. There were many of us, in the same box, until they set us free - at the Refuge. In a free running environment, where Julio, our master, feeds us organic grass and vegetables. There are 92 of us all together, even though you can never be sure about that. Some of us run wild during the day and escape the coop. Not to go anywhere, just to get scared and come back. But then we don't know who comes back; those who left and survived, or new ones just to make up the numbers. They all look the same. We all do. The annoying thing happens in the summer, when it gets crowded. With all these kids, stealing our eggs in the morning and clinging onto us. They behave like they've never seen a chicken before. We've never seen kids before too, but we behave. Always the same old.

I don't know how life is for others outside the coup, the Refuge, Queensborough, Ontario or Canada. I don't want to think too much about that (it is hard anyway) but I've heard scary stories. Too scary to be true but you never know. Here we are safe and have more than we need. The winter is coming and I hope to enjoy that too. Never seen winter before!

I don't know how everything is going to end but for now we are good, and want to thank everybody who contributed to that -in whatever capacity. For us it made a big difference. The only one we know. You made me a happy chicken and that's everything I care about for now.



Thank you again and Happy New Year!

Henrietta





Different Paths Bring the Same Joy

Michelle

Back in 2015, I became homeless and attempted suicide. Fortunately God was watching over me and I survived. I spent a month in hospital dealing with mental health issues.

Upon leaving the hospital I was placed in a women's shelter for homeless women with mental health issues where I spent 12 months. Part of the help given there, required that the women do 4 hours of volunteering each week which led me to St John's Bakery.

I have a passion for cooking and baking so the Bakery was a perfect match. Some weeks I would even volunteer for 2 shifts per week. During the summer of 2017 I became an employee of St John's Bakery on a part-time basis.

The Bakery is a wonderful place to be. The staff are friendly, helpful and always willing to teach the volunteers new skills. The Bakery and staff have helped give me more confidence in myself and allowed me to meet new people, which has allowed me to feel like part of community. Overall, being at St John's Bakery and part of the Mission has enhanced my life thru working, meeting and communicating with people from various walks of life.

Thank you to the Mission and Bakery for accepting me, how I am!

Milena

What made me do it? I recently started volunteering for the Mission breakfast program. Every Friday and Saturday, I wake up at 4:30am to catch the first bus. When I arrive, I first start washing dishes, then after a while, I take a break and sit with the people there. We have coffee and talk about things.

I got asked why do I do it. At first I said that I don't know. I asked myself that too. Then I started thinking and realized that when I go to church on Sundays, I always see the Mission space. One day it struck me how nice and cozy it looks and how much good work is done there. I thought, it must take a lot of effort to keep it that way. I was impressed and felt such a strong desire to contribute that I didn't even mind getting up so early in the morning. Then, once I started I felt that I had to continue, the pull was so strong, almost like an addiction. The Mission has a such a warm and welcoming feel to it that it's easy to feel like I belong. And it's such a great feeling to know that I can do some good too, to help somebody in a practical way.

Also, hearing the various life stories from the Mission people is helping me be more compassionate and I think making me richer in spirit. It is such a fulfilling experience. My hope is to keep volunteering as long as possible and to continue both giving back to the community and gaining insight into different ways of life. Hopefully it will make me a better person!



Mission sharing the Bakery's burden.
Sean cutting butter for scones.



Good memories at Good Neighbours...

Report from Scarborough

We've become a weird, little family up here. Kids come and kids go. Kids vanish for weeks at a time, only to sheepishly peek their heads through the screen door some day and be welcomed in by a chorus of familial voices. We've got kids with all varieties of attachments and motives: young kids from large families whose parents need a little relief time, diehard devotees, and hangers on, kids who will swing by if there's something fun happening, or, will come if the little kids are gone, old friends, new friends. There are some older kids (10-12 year olds) who really like being there. These are the kids who feel welcomed enough to return and return despite the allure of video games at their friend's houses and the often chaotic atmosphere in our apartment. Our small community is often overwhelmed by the mix of very small children with their larger brothers and sisters as they arrive every day after school. As the apartment gradually fills things can become a bit chaotic especially when you throw a few little ones on the autistic spectrum into the mix.

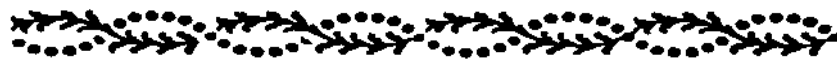


A larger group of older boys comes by on Wednesdays after soccer practice for pizza, a talk and then some kind of exuberant game outside (usually soccer). Every day, the kids come after school. We toss a pine cone around and the kids share their news for the day. We quiet ourselves for 15 seconds and then sing grace together. While they eat we read them a story. Then we play a game or do some kind of activity. Recent days have involved bobbing for apples, Daniel pretending to be a werewolf locked in the washroom and then chasing everyone across the lawn and a jeopardy trivia game.

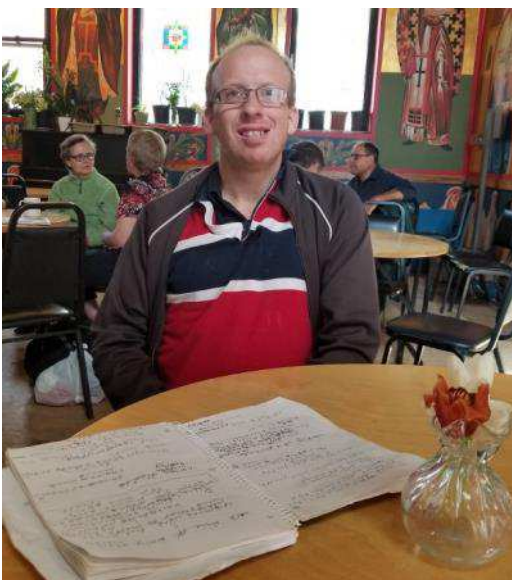


It's fun every day to see who will waltz in out of the cold and toss their backpack and coat onto the floor. Some kids toss off their shoes and socks as well. The kids certainly feel comfortable here, and they let their personalities come out. They can get pretty loud

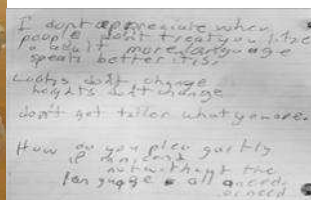
and we've cleared the place with a loud "that's it! Everybody out!" on more than one occasion. The day ends with the ringing of the bell that signals the beginning of the vesper prayer in the chapel. The kids are welcome to join, or to head home. Some stay, many don't. It's a peaceful end to many a wild club. Those who do choose to stay often do so with regularity and have learned many of the songs by heart.



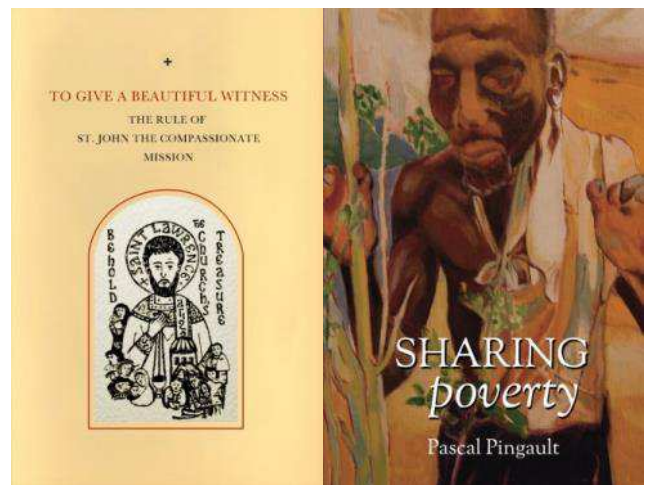
Br Luke



Marcel flips burgers by night and comes for breakfast Tuesday-Saturday. Some days he does not return home, just stays where he can, and goes back to work. He has a notebook he carries with him. Here we get a sample. A word from him.



"I don't appreciate when people don't treat you like a adult more language speak better it is. Looks don't change heights don't change don't get taller what you are. How do you plea guilty if innocent not without the language all a need or need"



Books published by St John's:
To Give A Beautiful Witness:
The Rule of St John

Sharing Poverty by Pascal Pingault

Interested in reading, please contact us at
info@stjohnsmisson.org

Any hope for Christmas?

My friend comes to the mission for breakfast every now and then. He lives across the bridge in Regent Park in a subsidized building. The building is new enough to escape the new developmental plan that is in full action these days in our part of the city, as in any other part I guess. "How is life across the bridge, with all the new changes in the neighbourhood? I asked. You know, he says, things seem to get worse than ever. A few days ago, somebody got killed as I was walking home. I heard the shot. The ambulance came and took him away. I saw his face... Things got really bad when the constructions started. All these people that I see when I go home now struggle with drugs and everything else. They seem lost. Before, they used to play a lot of basketball, and that kept them involved in something. But then, they took the basketball court down with the new plan for the neighborhood. There is a lot of instability and confusion. Who goes, who stays, who comes back."

Many things have been said about gentrification. At least here at the mission we hear that from people who are pushed out from the neighbourhood because of the increasing cost of living with every day. There is a lot of injustice with what is happening. But like everything else that is wrong and it grows, injustice is the same and produces different forms of evil, and the effect of that, at the end is death. We should not forget that.

"Where all this is going to lead to? I asked my friend. You know, he responds. I have hope. People can live together. The rich and the poor. Close to my subsidized building rich people moved in the neighbourhood. We respect each other. We need each other. We talk to each other. That's the way to go. But, I said skeptical, to live in community people need a meaning, a reason, something to bring them together. Father, we are neighbours, what do we need more? You know the story with the neighbour. That you can love him."

Fr Nicolaie



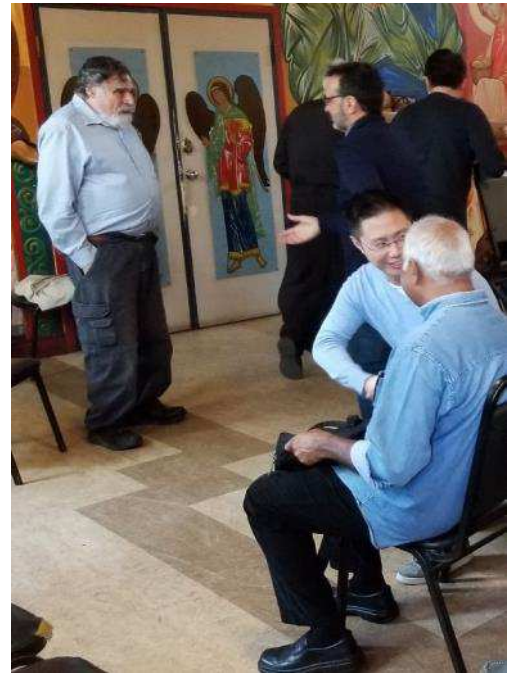
*Merry Christmas
to all our
St John's Family*



Great thanks to Prof Richard Schneider for his dedicated work in lecturing one Saturday a month during the **Diaconal Bootcamp**. The place where you can experience living in community.

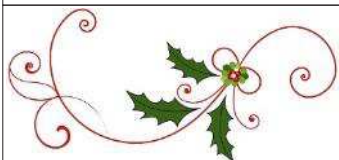
Prayers start at 5am.

All are Welcome!



Christmas Wish List

- Milk (powdered), Juice, Sugar
- Eggs, Margarine & Cold Cereal
- Pancake Mix & Syrup
- Fresh potatoes, onions, carrots, apples, oranges
- Herbs, spices, pepper and salt
- Dried beans and lentils
- Diced tomatoes
- Canned meat, fish, beans, soup, vegetables, fruit
- Dish soap & Laundry soap



*Please remember the Mission in your will.
You can't take it with you!
Memorial Dinners offered in Memory of a loved one.*



St John the Compassionate Mission

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