



"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back ..."

The homeless person who came to visit us on Thursday morning was not healed and did not come by himself. Johan literally carried him in the room where he collapsed on the floor. We did not know how he ended by the door. The rumors were that he had been discharged from the hospital. That was hard to believe because he could not walk, even with a cane, and when he realised that there were people around him, he started to cry, while laying on the floor, saying "I don't want to die today, I have pneumonia." We thought that what he needed was a hospital and doctors to treat him. No hospital would discharge him in that condition, or would they? He did have on his wrist the proof that he was in the hospital, at least recently. The scene seemed hopeless for all of us, and silence heavily pressed the room as he was screaming, the young volunteers who were helping with the food were scared and disturbed. Shawn brought two blankets where he had collapsed, just behind the baptismal font. He tried to make use of them. It was obvious that he needed to sleep. But he couldn't, the thought that he did not want to die that day and the fear that came with it kept him awake.

"To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God." (Prokeimenon Psalm 27.9,1)

He was sobbing and he was in very deep distress, physically, emotionally, spiritually, existentially, and so on. Something changed when Anthony started to play the Moonlight sonata on the piano. With that brokenness and lack of hope that touched all of us the music gave tears to his distress, and he became grateful for being able to cry. Coming closer to him, I could see better the bruises and blood that covered part of his face. His left hand was of little use for him. He couldn't grab anything with it. "It was because of a car accident in the past," he said, when we asked about it. "I was going to buy organic food from the Big Carrot and a car ran over me on the crossing. I don't want to die today. I am not ready. You know, when I was living up the street, I used to have a house and I was working for the bank, making under 200,000\$ a year, on the way to more. I used to see people on the street and tell them: go an eat at Good Shepherd if you are hungry and go get yourself a job you bum. I wat saying that ..." He stopped talking because he was crying, and it was hard to find his words... "I lost everything because of drugs. I had this nice house and a lot of friends visiting me. When I lost the house and the job everybody abandoned me. Apart from one person." As he was sharing his story, suddenly, he started to cry even harder saying that he could not understand why so many innocent people must die in the war in Ukraine: "I understand all their geo-political reasons on both sides, but I cannot understand why they have to kill all these people, why they cannot stop. So much suffering. God suffers, this is not right. My suffering means nothing compared to the innocent people dying there." He shared other things about his life and about his distress. He told us about his studies at UofT and about how successful he was before losing everything to drugs and other kind of different passions. He stopped to thank Anthony for the music that was a gift for him. That helped him cry. "I learned to play piano when I was a child, later on I stopped, now I cannot play because my left hand is not working."

"... praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus's feet, giving him thanks."

On that morning, we really were witnessing how a person who suffers from the leprosy of our times (drug addictions) glorified God. It was not because he was healed, but rather he glorified God while being on the cross. He was the good thief. And these are not big words. He really was. He confessed his sins and his desire to be alive in Christ's kingdom. His pain and suffering did not curse God or others but connected him with the suffering of the innocents who are killed today with no mercy. As he was talking, being on the floor, he reached out to

the box of sand where the candles are lit for the dead and for the living. He took the sand, and he blessed himself with it. He was reaching out for holiness and for a blessing so that what he had confessed could be forgiven. He received the holy water we had from Theophany in the chapel and a blessing with the oil. One could see the mercy of God on his bruised face. He asked us to give him something to eat because he had not eaten for two days. The young volunteer who was scared at the beginning brought him food and stayed on the floor chatting with him, until his friend came to pick him up. This was really a miracle. He had given a phone number to Shawn to call his old friend to come and help him. We saw scenes like this before, when people in high distress tried to reach out from the mission to somebody they trusted. Most of the time there was no answer on the other end of the line. This time his only friend that had studied with him in the past came and picked him up.

Community life

Diane came from British Columbia this week to stay with us for a little while and to discover the life of the community and work in the bakery. She is originally from France, and she studied French pastry. This coming week she is going to help us develop French pastry recipes for the bakery. Take time to welcome her within the community and be of help to her for everything she needs.

Br Luke took **Kevin** at the house because he had an intervention scheduled at the hospital the following day. He was going to lose two fingers because of a frost bite he got while sleeping outside on new year's night. Br Luke accompanied him for the procedure. The hospital sent him back on the streets with two fingers less than before, where he could easily get infected again. Joanna is asking us to pray for him. He is need of housing and help for his addictions.

Memory Eternal to Barbara! Heather's mom died on Friday morning. The day before, Heather, who is our good neighbour, asked the community to go and see her and pray at her bedside before she died. We were humbled by her trust shown to us. This week on Wednesday we'll have a memorial service for Barbara. Please come and pray together with Heather for the soul of her mom. **Mission church collections of 1 Sunday : Jan 8 2023, Donations \$495, Candle box \$63.45**

"He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."The leprosy of our time, for whom there is hardly any remedy, seems to be the addiction to drugs. In the Old Testament, lepers were outcast from the community but there was a path for them to reintegrate if the illness was cured. That's why Jesus sends them to the priest. To examine the wound, if it is cleaned, so that they can be accepted again within the community life. Today, the illness runs free spreading on the streets. There is no understanding that the illness is contagious. Today, in downtown Toronto, you feel this heaviness. Today, this "leprosy" is enabled in people by the system. And by spreading, it offers no path to treatment and recovery. No hope. They help spread the illness and with that the evil spirits of "fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (today's epistle) harm people's life. When looking at this suffering of the people in his time, Tolkien said in his novel: "there is no curse on earth for this treachery." We pray to God that the prayer of those who suffer today because of this betrayal of the leaders would be listened to by God and they would be healed so we can hear the voices who glorified God. We pray and we have hope.

Keeping the fire of humanity burning at the Mission

This is an open letter to all men, women and especially, children of good will.

In 2022/2023 in Canada, there has been another paradigm shift as significant in terms of what it means to be human. Like all real revolutionary social changes, they can go mostly undetected. Most Canadians are not even aware of how Canada is now leading the world in the most liberal laws regarding medically administered euthanasia. The official name MAiD stands for “Medical Assistance in Dying,” but it actually is legal permission for physicians and medical practitioners to kill their patients by lethal injection. (This is comparable to the type of lethal injection which has proven controversial when used in the U.S. to execute people, as it is considered by many to be inhumane.)

The purpose of this letter is not to tell you to get politically involved. Rather, it is first of all, as St. Paul says, “to equip the saints.” Every single person who reads this letter will at some point soon in their lives in Canada be made to face a decision involving MAiD. It will be either involve us or for someone else. In making a decision in this respect. We need to be prepared. Already every Canadian is being taught to accept MAiD (the killing of patients) as normal, desirable, and to be considered a medical procedure, a therapeutic option. If you have not yet heard the word mentioned to you or someone you love in this way, you soon will. It will be presented to you as reasonable.

All of us, before “giving a right answer before the judgment seat of Christ,” will have to answer to a socially-expected method of terminating your life. Our children, unless educated, will put pressure on us to choose MAiD. Most of us right now are not prepared to give a good answer before the medical “judgements seats” that await all of us.

This is not the future, this is the present. 2023 will be the year when the new death ‘option’ for Canadians will be legally “available” for all Canadians. At the end of 2022 the date of March 23 has been suspended. This should not be understood as a victory for life but only a tactical retrieve.

At the Mission, we have been aware that MAiD was being suggested to the poor by social workers for the past ten years. Now it will be everyone.

At present, this has the support of most Canadians: a recent survey found that the majority of church-going Catholics are in favor of it. However, it is not clear, when you talk to the average person, that people actually understand what they are in favour of.

At the Mission we like to be of help, to prepare each other for a time when we will have to make choices of life and death for ourselves and our loved ones, with a full understanding of what the gospel calls us to be. In January, until the beginning of Lent, we are offering several Bridges evenings to educate each other on what the gift of a “good death” actually looks like.

We will offer a background to the history of Euthanasia in western culture and in Canada. We will review the different arguments by which MAiD will be offered to us, or we will be urged to choose it for others. We will try to understand how society thinks about suffering and death. We will call out the ideologies that have prepared for this paradigm shift within the last few years. We will study where it leads our family and Neighbours. We will look on how children are being prepared in schools to think of MAiD as a compassionate choice.

We will look at some of the pastoral challenges it is raising right now for the church.

Most importantly, we will reflect on the Christian meaning of living for the Lord and dying with the Lord. Why the moment of death is central to our life of faith, how to prepare for it, how to accompany each other in this. How to live and die in a way that gives life to others and not just stay out of “suffering or hell.”

During these Bridges, we like to express our commitment to be for each other a source of support until death do us part. The Church prays daily for a death without pain. Suffering is not something that God wills. It is part of the care of the Church that each person faces his or her own death with the dignity of a child of God. A death

that is painless, dignified with a good presentation before Christ's Judgment is the desire of the church for each person. We want you to hear that the work of the church at the mission, as of 2023, is to really support anyone who wishes to die in Christ a Holy Death. Not alone, not abandoned in a hell of self-determination, but in the embrace of a community. To put our resources into helping those who need it.

That in 2023 we will try to build our network of similarly-concerned people to provide support and care for any one tempted with and vulnerable to MAiD.

This is not a condemnation on the average Canadian who, for whatever reason, honestly cannot imagine any other option but MAiD. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, founders of the Catholic Worker movement, often spoke of trying to help make "a society where it is a little easier to be good." It is very hard today in our climate for ordinary people, even practicing believers, to choose the good. Such immoral choices bring a lot of suffering in society that is not desired by God for us.

These Bridges before Lent are meant to create at the Mission a climate where it is a little easier to be good by education, catechesis, prayer and practical support to the most vulnerable members of Canadian society. Compassion shown, not through killing, but by honoring the great dignity of living and dying well in Christ. Our last conversation with San Egidio challenged us not simply admit defeat, but to have real hope and promise something that is a real and tangible alternative to the offer of death.

In this spirit of hope and assurance that death is not the last word in a person's life, we invite you to mark your calendars and come and equip yourself at Bridges.

Fr. Nicolaie
January 2023

January 16 - 23

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| Tuesday | 8:30 am 7:30 pm | Morning Prayer Prayer Psalms Study – via Zoom | Wednesday | 8:30 am 12:30 pm 4:00 pm 6:30 pm | Morning Prayer Noon Hours Vespers/Dinner Bridges, 8:00 pm Compline |
| Thursday | 8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm | Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer | Friday | 7:00 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm | Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer |
| Saturday | 9:00 am | Morning Prayer | Sunday | 7:00 am 8:30 am | Orthros Divine Liturgy |



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate “Mother Church of Christ’s poor”
under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa