



“Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Luke 17:12-19

“Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.” (Today's epistle Colossians 3:4-11)

Just before Christmas, Judy came to the mission on Saturday. She was kind, as usual, even though she looked in rough shape.

She had been absent for a long time. She never asked for anything if she wasn't offered. At that time, she was not sure what she had come for. When we offered her coffee and food, she gladly accepted. She had just come out from the hospital, where she had almost died. She was afraid it would happen again. “I am terrified”, she said. But despite her fear, she had not lost her sense of humour yet. Always keeping it in a hidden pocket of her being. Somehow, a deeper pocket than her fear of death. She did not tell us the reason for her being so close to death, but we could guess it was an overdose. It had already happened to her before.

Judy had a daughter. She had no hopes that she would ever speak to her daughter again. She felt so guilty that even the thought of hoping was foreigner to her. One could not help but wonder what this kind old lady could have done in the past to create such an abyss between her and her child. But we know that things happen even to kind people. Even they make mistakes which are hard to reconcile.

That day it was fear that brought Judy to church. She just wanted to be around because she rarely comes inside. Johan brought her food and asked a young volunteer to stay with her outside as she was eating and having her coffee and her cigarette. She wanted to find help, maybe a psychiatrist to help with her addictions. She said she would come back to talk to a counsellor at the mission. She really meant it this time. The days went by, and after Christmas we started hearing rumours that Judy had died. Johan heard them early in the morning in front of the mission. It was Heather who promised us that she will find out. She said she heard conflictual stories about Judy, just the week before, and she was determined to bring the truth to the surface. On Tuesday morning Heather brought us good news. Judy had not died; she was at St Michael's hospital, in the ICU unit.

That came as a shock for us, nonetheless with some hopes. Br Luke went the same day to see her at the hospital. He prayed for her while visiting. She was in very bad shape; uncertain how much time was left for her to live. She was connected to machines, which were doing most of the work for her now. On Thursday morning Heather brought us more news from the hospital. They had called her to inform her that Judy would be disconnected from the machines the same day. They were just doing their part of informing whoever wanted to know. I went with Heather and Br Luke to the hospital to pray and see Judy before the machines would be disconnected. Br Luke prayed the psalms and Heather talked to her while holding her hands. We prayed for forgiveness and for peace and union that Judy's soul was longing for. Her eyes would open at times during the prayer trying to say that she recognized us.

Before leaving we tried to understand who made the decision to pull the plug on Judy. The more questions we asked, the more confused we became. The nurse said it is possible that she is conscious since she opens her eyes and looks around. But the person in charge, outside of the hospital, made the decision to pull the plug on her. Since she had nobody, this decision was made by the system. But not to worry, the nurse said, if she had pain, she would give her two sedatives for relief. That will make Judy's departure quicker and with not much pain.

"What type of sedatives? And why are you giving her two? Is this going to speed up the process?"

The answer was not clear because the nurse was wearing a mask, and we could hardly see his face. Looking around, we couldn't help noticing the other people in the ICU unit. The loneliness of the people on their beds of pain was striking.

The nurse might have done the right thing for Judy. They seemed like kind people trying to do the best they could. However, just like in Judy's life story, even kind people can make mistakes. Especially since the system was getting things ready for them.

It gave us shivers to realize that in today's world the system is designed to make decisions for people on the bed of pain. After a while, we left. But Heather felt she needed to go back to Judy. She wanted to be with her in the moment of her departure. The next day she told us she held her hand and told her: "Don't be afraid Judy. God is waiting for you". She was peaceful when she left. And that was not a rumor. It was the truth.

"Behold now, what is so good or so pleasant as for brethren to dwell together? For in this the Lord has promised life everlasting.

He who adorns the lilies of the field commands us not to be concerned about our clothing.

In the Holy Spirit, the unifying Cause, all things are sustained in peaceful coexistence.

This is so for He is God, with the Father and the Son being truly one in essence. (Antiphon IV)

The loneliness of Judy in the ICU unit, together with the loneliness of all the other people for whom the system makes the final decision, is a reflection of the brokenness of the community today. A diagram of our disunity. An inner picture of this generation.

In the gospel, there is a unity in the prayer of community. The prayer for healing of the ten lepers is the prayer of those who suffer and are broken. The illness brings them together. The unity is expressed in prayer to God who answers their prayer. It is in the prayer of Thanksgiving that the community fails. The miracle of healings breaks the community of the lepers. There is no more communal prayer but only a foreigner who gives thanks on behalf of many. Sometimes the price of a miracle is the breaking down of community. The time where we are filled with good things is a time of temptation. Of departure. Of forgetting God. And still, God heals us because He restores us in His love.

The gift of unity is greater than the gift of healing. Or at least that's what we hope and pray that Judy lived at the very end. The healing and unity don't exclude each other but they are rather signs of restoration in Christ. However, in today's generation, we better remain poor and in need of healing but together in Christ, then be healed alone and segregated through disunity. Because the first is a matter of time and patience where the other one deals with eternity, where individual salvation would be hard to be find.

Memory Eternal to Judy!

From the community:

- We welcome among us John Romain, a visitor from the USA. He has been with us for the last week. Please introduce yourself this morning.
- Please keep in your prayers Judy's soul. Father Nicolaie with Br Luke and Heather went to see her at the hospital before she was disconnected from the machines.
- If you know of anyone who is in the hospital or needs a home visit, please speak to father about this.
- If you feel called or interested in pursuing a training /formation to visit the sick or shut in, please speak to father also about your desire.

This week's announcements:

- **Tuesday Psalms study at 7:30 pm** through Zoom
- **Wednesday 6:30 pm continuing our *Bridges Fr. Steinhardt series:***

we will view and discuss a video with Ilan Pappé, a controversial Israeli historian who was recommended to us by a close friend of our community who lived many decades in Israel. The point of these studies is to hear with the heart what is behind the suffering today of these different peoples. The mistakes and even injustices of the past often hold a key to a path of healing that hatred and new wars never can bring about.

- **Friday at 7 am: Orthros** - if you never attended a regular early service at the mission, why not try this Friday? First comers will be treated with coffee and a croissant after the service, with father Nicolaie.

'Bridges' at St. John's Mission

The 'Father Nicolae Steinhardt series' — Wednesdays,
6:30 p.m., January-March, 2024

"Never did Christ ask us to be stupid...God asks us to be intelligent...to understand the devil's trickeries." Nicolae Steinhardt was a Romanian political prisoner of the communist regime. Baptized in prison, he became a monk after his release.



Father Steinhardt

Wednesdays, 2024, 6:30 p.m., at the Mission

Jan. 17 – Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, MD, MPH, "I Shall Not Hate"

Jan. 24 – Ilan Pappé (Israeli historian), video interview, from extensive written work on the history of Israel and the Palestinians

Wednesday 31st January, 2024 Fr Roberto

On Archangel Gabriel

Feb. 7 – Elena Kostyuchenko, "Why I love Russia" (interview)

Feb. 14 – On silence - "We listen to the silence," by Enzo Bianchi, a reflection on an article published in La Repubblica, October 2023, concerning necessary silence and authentic freedom

Feb. 21 – Derek Finkle (in person), on harm reduction; author of "I worked at a safe injection site and it was disturbing," National Post, Nov. 2023

Feb. 28 – With the Eyes of the Soul: the Life of St. Porphyrios

Mar. 6 – Father Nicolaie, on Father Nicolae Steinhardt

Wednesday March 13, 2024 (just before the forgiveness Sunday)

Fr Roberto

On prayer

January 22-28

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

Monday: - 8am Divine Liturgy of St Basil



St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission
 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9
 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmission.org W: stjohnsmission.org
St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission
 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3
 T: 647-358-4105



We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
 the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, January 21, 2024

5 of 5

©2024 St. John the Compassionate Mission

www.stjohnsmission.org