

ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE
NEWSLETTER
Lent 2009



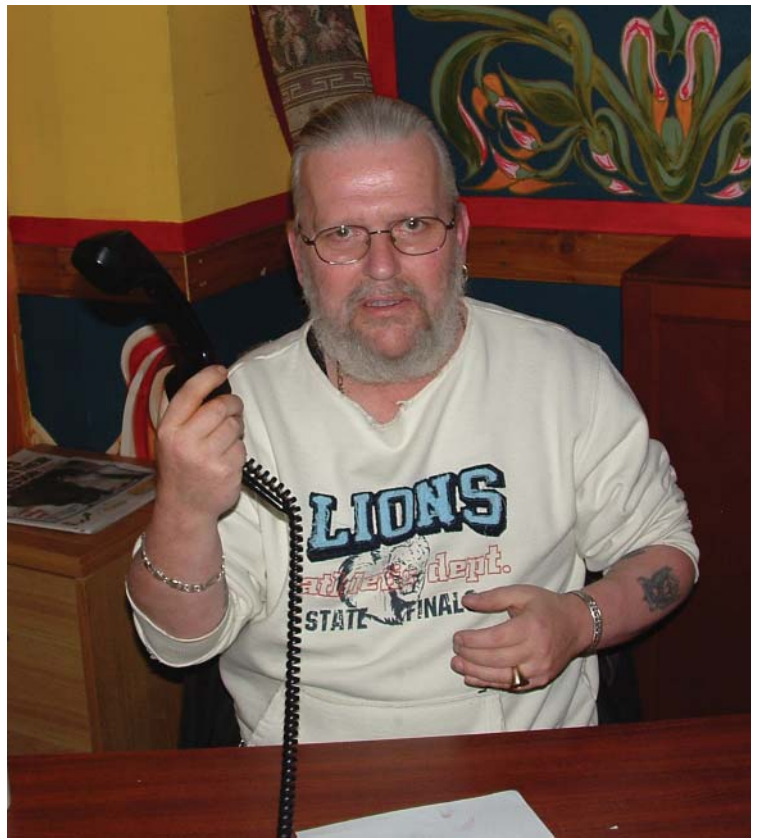
“This is the Fast the Lord Desires
to share your Bread with the Hungry,
Open your homes to the homeless Poor,
Remove the yoke of Injustice,
Let the Oppressed go Free.”

The Face behind the Phone

Jim Ward is the face behind the phone on Wednesday mornings! Born and raised in the same block in the East End of Toronto he claims that his greatest love in life is his wife Judith, who happens to work in the office! Long hair, bearded, rode a Harley - “the only bike worth riding”. Jim’s claim to fame is not his past association with the Paradise Riders or Satan’s Choice. Rather, he claims his true skills are working with them so that their better side came out. He enjoys working at the Mission, people get along and do not complain about each other. He is a great singer and a good guitar player who played with some of the best bands.

One of his memorable days at the Mission was the day he helped a woman who was clearly mentally challenged and very agitated, he helped her calm her down and she left the Mission all smiles.

What he now most looks forward to is his “new pain”. Jim has many health issues and new pain is kind of distracting at this point of his life.



The Man Who Makes the Mother Rise!

Raymond A. Dye works at our Bakery. He started work with us about 5 years ago. His day starts at 1am and goes on until all the bread has left for its destinations around 9-10am. A quiet man, he loves to work the silent shift. His crucial duty is in the feeding of the main levain – la mère – the mother. He makes sure that this source of levain never dies; he also prepares some of the levain each day. One time he made a mistake and the “mother” died and this virtually shut down the Bakery for a week.

Raymond really shows us how all our roles are crucial, indispensable and what a gift each person is to this community we call St John’s.

The Next Generation

Misty and Zack, come all the way from Regent Park. Misty who started attending our Saturday Bible Club when she was only 9 is now 31. Her son Zack who is 2 is the youngest of four children. Zack is our youngest volunteer. He helps set the tables, delivers Fr Roberto’s mail, attends church Services with his grandmother Jeannie and kisses all the icons.



A Winter Night's Tale

Mitch and Ana are a young couple who left Halifax last August with another couple and one dog and three cats. They were inspired by a movie called, "Into the wilderness" and wanted to leave what was familiar and live a way of life that was unconventional. The first few weeks they hitchhiked in the east coast until the couples split up in Sydney. In the east coast they met many kind people who somehow shared their desire for adventure and supported their efforts. Things changed dramatically once they entered Quebec and Ontario. Constantly harassed by police and drug users living on the street, they eventually found their way to Toronto hoping that Ana's mother would follow through with her promise to receive them in her



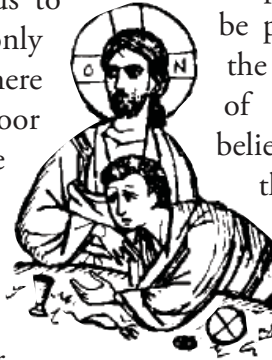
home. They soon found themselves living on the street. One night as they were harassed by a drug dealer they called 211 and were told that the only drop-in open at that late hour in the city was St John the Compassionate Mission. So they walked across town to us. The next morning we found our friends with their animals sleeping underneath the stairs outside the building. With support from St John's and generous neighbours from across the street, Mitch and Ana found temporary lodging.

Their aim is to get a stable place to live, Ana wants to go back to school and Mitch has applied for a position at our Bakery.

Mitch and Ana are a very quiet and kind couple but what really impressed me is their total honesty, a rare virtue in our society.

The Liturgy of Compassion

"St John Chrysostom teaches us to leave the altar of the Eucharist only to go to the altar of the poor, there to serve in the persons of the poor the same body of Christ that we served in the memorial of his passion and Resurrection... it is on the altar of the poor that the passion of God becomes the compassion of His Church for



human beings... not with barren emotions or empty words... For to suffer with, to be powerless, to become poor with the poor, is to share in the weakness of God on the cross. We must believe and enter into this kenosis that becomes ours through compassion. Without it there is no communion, community or resurrection!"

Fr Jean Corbon

Meet the Office Staff

Rudina and Judith (Jim's wife) are the voices that you hear when you call the office. They work long hours, but are always smiling. Hard to believe but true... well Rudina does pull hair sometimes! They love working with all of us crazy people and to learn and develop valuable and marketable skills.

The most memorable time for them was the period during the so called "Decade of Renovation". They had to work in the "cage" sharing space with cans, carrots, fruit flies and hanging wires, cold breezes and most dreaded of all – with Angela(!) potatoes and onions. Released from the cage (for good behaviour), together they now form a close knit family in the new office.



ORDER OF ST LAZARUS OF JERUSALEM

St John's depends on the generosity of others to be able to do what it does. For one of us at the Mission it was a welcome break from everyday life here to accept an invitation from the Toronto Commandery of the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem to personally receive a cheque for the work of the Mission from their Ecumenical Chair Irene Taylor. OSLJ has a centuries-old tradition of succour for the needy and the marginalized going back to the Order's foundation when the Knights of OSLJ cared for lepers. We thank the members of OSLJ for their generosity and their warm hospitality and their continuing support of the work of the Mission.



CHRIS CUNINARY Executive Officer (CEO) of the MORNING PROGRAM

I like going to St John's because I was given the opportunity to mix with people just like me. To meet people from all walks of life and to learn about the different cultures that make us so diversified. At St John's it's not just a church gathering, it's a family and the feeling of togetherness is intensified when we all join around the table to have lunch or dinner. It is a pleasure helping out in the kitchen as I enjoy cooking and consider this to be a learning experience.

St John's presents an opportunity to be a part of the community, to mix and to worship, to work and to learn, to forget and relax. It is like a vacation we can't always afford. (Chris starts his day at the Mission at 5:45am)

It is not difficult to be a pessimist these days. Gloom, and even doom, abound wherever you look. The stock markets are down. Banks are in trouble. Redundancy is staring many people in the face. Governments are panicking. Sorry, I mean governments are "responding robustly" to the financial crisis. How is it for you? Perhaps you are weeping for the poor businessman who lost 80% of his stock value and is now down to his last \$20billion. Perhaps you are too worried about your own situation to have spare tears for anyone else. Perhaps, as more people are tipped over the thin line between managing and poverty, you are getting fed up with panhandlers and their constant demands for "change", for "a cigarette". It's easy to judge, "probably just a crackhead". Actually she **was** a crackhead. Knew she was crackhead; had seen her smoking crack. She asked for money again. I just wanted a coffee in peace. Said "hi" asked how she was doing, but gave nothing. She would only smoke it anyway. That night she was murdered and others also made a judgment and ignored her screams in a Toronto. For several hours. A man who lived through most of the horrors of 20th century Europe said that "to be divine we need to be fully human". We may fail to be divine but we can always be more human. That there are still a lot of humans out there is the good news that doesn't make the headlines. E. M.

cover picture: Jeannie, Community President breaking bread with Jean Vanier at St John's last June

St John the Compassionate Mission

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