



*Merry Christmas*  
*From*

ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE MISSION

› 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY › 2007 ›



**Hello** and welcome, my name is Trevanna Keri Bondarenko, my friends call me Treva. I am Mother Sophia's side-kick in the kitchen, and I also work in our thrift store, I like to cook and I love clothes. So being at both places is cool. My mother Leendiana (Linda in English) died last August 19, 2006. I was renting a condo from her in Kitchener, Ontario but when she died I could not keep up with the condo payments so in June of 2007 I moved into a little loft in a house in Toronto. I wanted to take my faith more seriously after my girlfriend Kateland (Katie) committed suicide two years ago.

I am volunteering in the kitchen at St. John's Mission for the past three months, cooking food for people that are less fortunate than I am. To see them smile and say thank you after they have finished eating, warms my heart. I also attend Church here on Sundays and feel very welcome here by everyone which puts me at ease.



Two very high points have happened to me here since my first day coming here. The first being at a visit here a few weeks ago and standing beside a Russian Sister in white. My last name is Russian. Trevanna in English means grass and Keri is English for Carrie. The other high point was meeting and being blessed many times by a Romanian Bishop. Who also smiled and waved goodbye as he got into his American rented car and left us in awe that Sunday.

I paint, model, draw and have been playing guitar and piano in a band from Jazz to Rock from my yearly teens to today. Well I hope this story will not be lost again. Thank you for reading this.

God bless, **Treva**



*Kim & Tylor wishing all our  
friends A Merry Christmas*

...wondering how to respond when a person asks you for money, here is someone's reflection on it...

**"There** but for the Grace of God go I, people say. But do they really mean it? Do they really understand that it could be any of us or our children standing on that corner, cold, hungry and needing some human connection? Do they (we) really understand that the constant social service cut-backs at the Federal and Provincial levels have had a devastating impact on the unemployed, disabled, poor, and working families? And that with the loss of health or a job, it could be any of us?"

So let this be our lesson this holiday. No-one should have to beg for food or shelter; but until we build a just society in which no-one has to beg, please don't pass a panhandler without stopping, talking and sharing what you have. The person you help is yourself in a mirror."

**Maude Barlow**, Council of Canadians

## News From The Kitchen

**First** you heard of the “flying nun.” Then there were the “singing nuns.” Now at St. John’s Mission we have the “cooking nun”!

Mother Sophia comes to us from the Monastic Community of St. Silouan the Athonite (OCA), near Ottawa, to which she is still attached. She is in Toronto for a while in order to be of help to a family member. Hoping to find a warm, friendly parish to attend while in our city, she soon discovered St. Silouan’s Chapel at St. John’s Mission. It wasn’t long before she felt like part of the community. She sings in the choir and tries to attend as many services as possible.

But her most challenging work at St John’s is managing the kitchen on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. When he asked her to take on this task, Fr Roberto said that he wanted a “kinder, gentler kitchen” not a typical “hell’s kitchen” so popular on TV these days!

Mother Sophia’s particular concerns in the kitchen are twofold:

1) that everyone working there feel that they are an important part of a compassionate team, serving Christ in this work;

2) that good, healthy nutrition for those who eat with us should be of the highest priority.

Mother says that all kinds of “interesting” (madly frustrating?) things can happen in the kitchen, like the time all the lids for the pots completely disappeared.

She climbed on top of the stove and looked on the shelf above it. Nothing. She looked beneath all the counters. Nothing. She even took a peek inside the refrigerator. Nothing. Hours later, all the guilty lids showed up when a person tall enough to reach to the back of the highest shelf, pulled out the biggest pot of all (hardly



ever used). That’s where they were cleverly hidden. Mother says she was thankful that she had been praying to St. Phanourios, who has never failed her when she loses something! She hopes that everyone reading this will keep the work of St John’s kitchen in their regular prayers.

Mother Sophia Zion



**Olutosin** was born in Nigeria from a big family in the village of Abeokita in West of the country. Olutosin is a Christian Nigerian. She just arrived in April 2007. In Nigeria she sold clothes in stores. In Canada Olutosin is alone with Ololade. Started to volunteer at the Mission helping to feed people with her little daughter Ololade. Olutosin is grateful that she can be “here at the Mission helping the poor”.

Her hope is to become a pharmacist.

Her gentle look and smile along with her daughter Ololade who is also our youngest volunteer (3 years old) lights up the mission. They do not know what she will do when she sees snow for the first time.



## As Many As are Faithful!

The world in which we live today is much concerned with status and with power expressed in many ways. One need only watch a few adverts on TV to see where values lie. The viewer is bombarded with images that preach only one message,

that you are what you are, that you are what you have and if only you would use this product you can be a better what you are and you can have more and better things and moreover you can have it all without paying now - the ultimate "pie-in-the-sky"! Even religion is sold on the basis of what it can give you.

The Gospels paint an altogether different picture of values. It is not the rich or the powerful who are praised. It is not the even the high religious leaders who are to be emulated. The value of a person is not based on his/her status, on the size of his/her house, or car, or the number of holidays in exotic places they have. No, over and over again it is the poor and the humble, the humiliated, the dispossessed, the meek, the powerless whose example we are asked to follow. It is unimportant whether we have five talents, or three talents or only one talent. All that is important is that we use the talent we have.

Indeed, the Gospels go further, they offer us a new picture of God Himself, a God who debases Himself, who accepts and embraces the role of a servant. When his disciples



...washing is a process that has to be repeated over and over again...

(who hadn't at that point quite got the message.) asked who was greatest, Jesus showed them what great really means, by washing their feet. This common act of

hospitality is given new meaning, that if you want to be first in the Kingdom of God you have to become a servant. Sometimes this washing of feet is literal (as when people come to the foot clinic at the Mission) and at other times it is expressed in all the small ways in which a person is treated as a person. Today even care for the poor is given "status" through specific outcomes to be achieved. But often a person doesn't need an outcome he/she simply needs something small, to be heard, to be listened to, to be fed, to have a place to be warm (or cool), a place where they can make those small steps that can truly change their lives. There is nothing automatic about this, nothing romantic or idealistic. As we all know washing is a process that has to be repeated over and over again.

Often in the life of a person one step forward is followed by two steps back. But as one wise monk said it is not important how often we fall, it is only important how often we get up. In the life of the Church we are



given many images and one of those images of service in small things is that of the ministry of the under-servant, or sub-deacon as he is usually called. And the symbols of the sub-deacon are the orarion, the symbol of the service of the angels before the Throne of God and the basin, the jug of water and the towel with which he washes the hands of the bishop. As the sub-deacon

washes the hands of the bishop he says, "As many as are faithful" to which the bishop replies, "All are faithful." And all can be faithful if not in great then at least in small

things. This smallness can even be as small as standing, waiting in one place like the sub-deacon at his ordination but ready to wash the hands of another when needed. Then the words of Christ may apply to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, and share your Master's joy." Matthew 25:23

Sub-Deacon Pawel



## Children and Youth Programs

In our ongoing endeavour to reach out to newcomer and at-risk children and youth in our community, St. John's held some activities this summer. The activities were aimed at giving disadvantaged children and youth the opportunity to try new skills, increase their experiences and have some 'good old-fashioned fun'.

On August 6th, 25 children were taken on a successful day trip to St. Mary of Egypt Refuge (just outside of Tweed) where they had the opportunity to roast marshmallows, fish and hike through the beautiful Ontario countryside.

On August 21st, a small group of children were treated to a pottery painting workshop where they had the opportunity to unleash their creative potential.

On August 27th, 12 children were taken on an unforgettable trip to MarineLand. Many were so excited they could not sleep the night before! With wonderful memories and exhilarating stories to recount, the children looked forward to sharing their experiences with their friends at the start of the new school year - something they would not have been able to do without your generous support, our volunteers and sponsors.

Thank You! **Lara Jannou**



## Meet Our New Baker

After spending three years in two of the well-respected, intense professional kitchens on Toronto, I no longer can live to work. I need to have a balanced life! During the time I was recuperating from exhaustion, I came across the St. John's Bakery at Riverdale Farmers' Market in October 2006. I also remembered hearing a program from the CBC Radio "Tapestry" on St. John the Compassionate Mission in 2001 when I was still living in Ottawa.

In one of my visits to Toronto in 2003, I went looking for St. John's Bakery on Queen St. E. but I was not able to find the bakery.

Six years later, I found St. John's breads at the Riverdale Farmers' Market. In order to keep myself occupied while I was deciding where I should go for my next job, I called up the Bakery and said to Marc that I would like to become a volunteer.



I first made banana bread and quatre-quarts. In January 2007, I became a paid-employee. Slowly, I started making scones, galettes, tarts and other sweet goods.

I enjoy baking with organic, local seasonal fruits and the bakery skills and put into practice of the things which I learnt from my culinary school.

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Luke 2: 10 - 12

## 20th ANNIVERSARY COMMUNITY BUILDERS NIGHT



Once again this year to the sound of flute and fiddle we danced the night away celebrating the people that keep St. John's open throughout the year. Fr Roberto reminded those who came that, "you are not just volunteers but rather leaders in this community. Thanks to your gifts and talents our neighbourhood is a better place. Unlike social services our community is not about the poor, or the rich, but about just people. Real social change comes from people like you and who give of themselves and 'don't count the cost'. It is the Church that inspires all of us to serve and love others as Christ has welcomed us." Everyone received a recognition of their contribution (in the form of a certificate) both to our community of St. John's and the Riverdale neighbourhood. Patti Fournier was our honorary leader who received the prestigious Peter Stire Award.

## New Community Advisory Board

The new board was sworn in on Sept. 13 during the Wednesday night Vespers Service. The Community Advisory Board is made up of local residents who get together every 2nd Wednesday of each month to discuss the daily issues of our Mission life. Each member commits to serve for one year. This is a unique opportunity for people to learn to work in a more formal structure and to develop leadership skills. Members are as follows: Judy, Angela, Jeannie, Jack, Sandy, Debbie, Lara, Rowena, Treva, Mother Sofia, Jahal and Fr. Roberto.

## Visitors From Belarus

Several weeks ago the Mission was pleased to receive two visitors from Belarus from the Convent of St. Elizabeth. Mother Necefora and Sister Tatjana had come to Canada sell items made in their monastery to support the work of the convent. St. Elizabeth's is named after the Grand Duchess Elizabeth who founded a unique community in Moscow dedicated to Sts Martha and Mary that worked among the poorest people of Moscow. Her work came to an end when she was martyred by the Soviets in 1918. The Convent of St. Elizabeth continues her work in modern day Belarus caring for orphans and the mentally ill. The convent also has a farm where homeless men live in community and rebuild their lives. The community began formally only in 1999 with a handful of nuns who have already grown to a community of 80. In traditional Russian style they are helped by 'Sisters of Mercy' who are women who dedicate a part of their lives to the service of the needy without necessarily becoming nuns themselves. They wanted to visit St. John's as a place that shares their life albeit in a very different culture.





Keep On Trucking

Thrift Store Update

On Sept. 30 under the leadership of Tina we participated in the national “life chain” event. With a group of energetic children about 20 people stood silently on Broadview Ave. reminding passing traffic with signs, that abortion is practiced in Canada. During that hour a few fingers went up, some honks but most people just “kept trucking on”. From where I stood I could see “the house on Kintyre Ave.” that just a few months ago had made headlines in all newspapers. Every TV and radio station descended on this little street next to the Mission. Even as recently as a week ago it again made the front page of the Star. A city devastated to discover that what appears to have been a still birth was simply buried inside a house?! Horror, fear, anxiety, endless news coverage! Nonetheless, thousands of lives are every year killed and discarded without most people knowing or even caring. A city obsessed with finding out the truth about a baby that simply did not make it through birth 82 years ago but on this Sunday afternoon couldn’t care less about snuffed out inconvenient lives (1 in every 3 pregnancies and 90% of all Down Syndrome ends in abortion in Canada). The paradox frankly is almost too much to bear!

In 1988/89 I heard a talk by the father of abortions in Canada, Dr. Morgentaler. For him abortion was “compassion in action.” If you had only “wanted” births, poverty and suffering would cease in our society. Is it no wonder that the closest abortion clinic is across from Regent Park? As a past college student nurse of mine (when I used to work in a health facility) once said at a general staff meeting, “these people (the poor), you know, none of them would be here if we had done our job right”.

Poverty and abortion are not just moral issues but also political and social choices based on careful planning and vision by people who have power, while the rest of us just keep on trucking on! **Father Roberto**

Well it is hard to believe we just celebrated our 1st anniversary just a few months ago, up here on the Danforth. And what a year it has been, through hard work, vision and compassion the store is going forward in more ways than one. Not only do we help people with clothing and household items. We help people spirituality, they ask me to pray for their loved ones in need and I do, as well I pass them onto Fr. Roberto, he does a better job than I do.

The store was also blessed in the winter. What an event that was with Fr. Roberto, Pere Philippe, Hilda (godmother, flying nun), Edmund, my sister Elizabeth and Jeannie. I led everyone around the store with a cross held high while Pere Philippe wiped Holy water everywhere. I got soaking wet.

What an experience from my heart I would like to thank all my brothers and sisters for donating all the much needed items. Clean and folded, nice furniture for a lot of poor people. My thanks also goes out to the volunteers and the hard work that they do, “people helping people”, what a beautiful concept. I would like to end this letter with a bit of humour.



One day I was told that I should tune down the amount of icons on the wall, so I took them all down except for one. People inquired about the change, so I explained and then all of sudden there was a lot of laughs when Mother Sofia arrived. She relieves me on Mondays; the joke is we now have a Nun at the store. All that I say is it is Church politics, I feel like a winner up here and this store is part of my Catechumen journey. Thank you,

Yours truly, **Christian**

# Thank You!

To the Junior American Carpatho-Russian Youth  
for their support of our food program  
They raised during Lent over **\$8,000 U.S.**

## Things We Need:

**Used** gift bags, wrapping paper, little items for gifts, label pricing gun for thrift store, toilet paper, napkins, paper towel, bleach, laundry detergent, coffee (regular grind), baked beans, diced tomatoes (cans), mushroom soup, pepper, herbs and spices, Aluminium foil (large size), olive oil

## Tax Tip:

**St. John's Mission** issues charitable tax receipts are issued that will reduce your Federal & Provincial income tax.

## For example:

INCOME RANGE	\$34,758.00 - \$69,517.00		ABOVE \$69,517.00	
YOUR GIFT OF	TOTAL TAX SAVINGS	ACTUAL COST TO YOU	TOTAL TAX SAVINGS	ACTUAL COST TO YOU
\$100.00	\$22.05	\$77.95	\$25.44	\$74.56
\$200.00	\$44.10	\$155.90	\$50.88	\$149.12
\$500.00	\$164.58	\$335.42	\$190.10	\$309.90
\$1,000.00	\$365.38	\$634.62	\$422.15	\$577.85
\$5,000.00	\$1971.78	\$3,028.22	\$2,278.54	\$2,721.46

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