



ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER

Great Lent 2011

And the Silver Goes To...???

No, the Winter Olympics haven't come to Toronto but the silver anniversary of the foundation of St John the Compassionate Mission did arrive in January this year. 25 years since the Mission opened its doors on Blake Street! We knew it was coming of course but the question was how to commemorate this event. A big posh party some how didn't seem appropriate for a community living with the poor and marginalized. Then out of the blue, (as so often happens at St John's), up popped the solution when we got a request from Bob and his family to provide a weekend meal for 150 people.



Mega thanks goes to Zoe, Bob and Lesley, James and Nicole

A date near the actual date of the opening of the Mission was agreed upon – Sunday January 23rd. Posters and flyers were produced advertising a 25th Birthday Party for St John's to which all were welcome. The first 25 through the door to get gatecrasher prizes. A new invention - the St John Cake – was invented! There is a Greek tradition of a cake baked in honour of St Basil whose feast falls on the first day of the New Year. The Vasilopota, as it is called, is given to people who have made a significant contribution to parish life to honour them for their work in the year past. An extra bonus is that somewhere inside the cake is a special coin. The St John Cake (with 25 candles of course) was to be given to each person who came, to honour them for being themselves, and there was not one, but two coins. But this is to get ahead of the event itself.

The first problem to address was how to set up the hall. Who would come? How many would come? We didn't really expect 150 people on a cold Sunday night but we played safe and set up for as many as we could accommodate. The tables were decorated; vast numbers of balloons and streamers were floating around to create a festive atmosphere. The food was ready; servers were standing by ready to leap into action, the music from the fiddlers was spreading creating a party mood – but how many would come to eat all this beautifully prepared food? The answer was not long in coming as cold hands starting beating on the doors demanding entrance and enter they did in droves and in moments the place was full up with still more waiting for a place at the tables.

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St John's Academy

The New Year began in earnest at St John's Academy, as several new students began their after-school tutoring with their mentors. Students have been very motivated in their learning and attend regularly.

On Saturday, January 22, we held a study skills workshop, led by Emily, our co-op student. There were 6 participants who braved the exceedingly cold temperatures, to experience a workshop on organizing their work, as well as study strategies to succeed in exams and assignments.

Students from grades 6 to 9, who need help in English or Math, may apply for tutoring in the Academy, at any time in the school year. The tutoring is free, except for a nominal registration fee. Students are assessed and matched with a suitable tutor. Currently, we have 18 students, some of whom attend twice weekly.

We also have a solid, dedicated group of mentors (tutors) who volunteer their time to help students succeed in English or Math. Thank you to all the mentors, who have made this program a success, there are 15 active mentors at present.

I encourage any adult who is interested in volunteer their time for one hour a week, to consider become a mentor in this program. Your interest and dedication will have a lasting impact on the next generation, and in due course, will produce lasting benefits for everyone in our society.



Nabiha and Michele

to nine, in Math and English. I tutor about four students a week. The academy is a great program and you see the difference it makes in these kids' lives.



Sunny, Emily, Naomi, and Tamas

here has been a great experience, and the people who work here are all very nice people. Thank you everyone for making my placement here a good one. Emily Corvo, Student Placement

If you would like to know more, please drop by to the Academy on any Monday, Tuesday or Thursday from 4:00pm, and observe our program in action. Bodh Sarawati, Director SJA

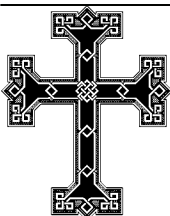
My Experience

My name is Emily; I am a second year social service student at George Brown College. I am currently in my last month of placement here at St John the Compassionate Mission. I work here from Monday to Thursday, and on Saturdays.

On Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday I work in the academy with Bodh. The academy is a tutoring program, for students grade six to nine, in Math and English. I tutor about four students a week. The academy is a great program and you see the difference it makes in these kids' lives.

When I am not tutoring and at the academy, on Wednesdays I help with the Food for Family program with Naomi. I help with set up, taking people through, and sometimes keep the appointment book. The Food for Families goes from one o'clock to four o'clock. Also, I help with Naomi with the family activity night, which is now in the afternoon and parents do not have to stay with their kids. We had to change the time, because we could not get enough people out at night. Although I was not there for the first afternoon, I heard that there were about six kids that came. Each week we do something different - anything from baking to crafts.

Although my placement here is coming to an end, because I have to go back to classes, I plan to still continue to tutor two students a week, one on Tuesday and one on Thursday. When I finish classes, I plan to come back and help with the Food for Families again. Working



Memorial Meals - Eternal Memory!

We are grateful to those who have offered a meal to the poor in memory of a loved one. On the day the meal is offered a notice is posted informing those who come to the meal for whom and by whom it is offered. If desired, a short memorial service precedes the meal. If you wish to offer a memorial meal, please contact the Mission.

St John's Kids Klub

I'm looking out the window on the second floor of St. John's Mission. The weather is fine (haven't you heard the birds chirping?), the snow is melting, and a boisterous crowd of children led by our volunteers Paul & Maurice is marching down Kintyre Avenue in this direction.

It's Saturday... time for St. John's Kids Klub! Happy and excited are words that describe the children when they come to Kids Klub at the Mission. Rashon*, being naturally curious, explores his new surroundings – the paintings on the walls, the chapel, the piano and fireplace, oh – and where's the bathroom? With so many volunteers, each child gets individual attention if they want it. Nikki* got one-on-one coaching trying Chinese checkers for the first time with Hiro. Mattea* and Sophie decorated Valentine's Day cupcakes together. And they relish in it.

So do our volunteers, who eagerly brainstorm ideas for the next Kids Klub. Ballroom dancing lessons, crocheting, charcoals and pastels, the list goes on and on. The ideas behind Kids Klub? Give parents a much-needed break. Give volunteers a meaningful way to contribute to their community through investing in children. And give children a fun way to broaden their horizons and build friendships on a Saturday afternoon.

Simple, right?

Why not share your gifts and talents with the children of our neighbourhood at St. John's Kids Klub? You'll be richly rewarded! Contact Naomi in the Family & Youth Department at 416.466.1357 x 4 or email stjohnandmaria@gmail.com so you can start volunteering! Naomi Funk *not their real names



Groucho Marx comes to visit!



Latest Media Coverage

Global News Toronto: "Rising hope", We profile St John's Bakery, which takes as much pride in transforming lives as it does in creating the perfect loaf. Susan Hay reports. Feb. 21, 2011.

<http://www.globaltoronto.com/video/index.html?releasePID=nri43VUpW1kT5pxmORQRezKol3tkQvzq>

Ancient Faith Radio: "Learn from the Poor at the Lived Theology School", Bobby Maddex interviews Fr. Roberto Ubertino, the executive director of St. John the Compassionate Mission in Toronto, Ontario, and Dn. Pawel Mucha, the prefect of the mission's Lived Theology School. February 23, 2011.

http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/learning_from_the_poor



Ti Amo

Sean Rowley has been a regular volunteer on Wednesdays during the last three years. Now he regularly serves up the soup with his winning smile. Born in Toronto, 27 years ago, his mother is Italian and dad First Nations. When not volunteering at the Mission he bakes at Lemon & Allspice Catering. He loves to hang out with friends and really enjoys coming to the Mission. His favourite Italian expression that he learned from his mother is TI AMO. It means "I love you". Sean's life is the living out of this expression. FR



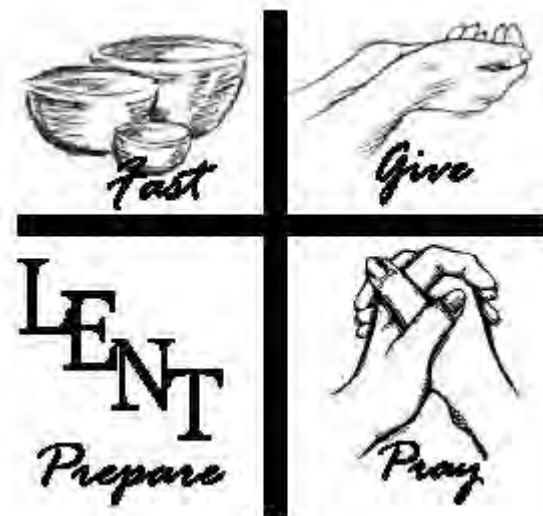
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As usual the food was blessed, the St John Cake was borne in, ablaze with candles, "Happy Birthday" to St John's was sung with gusto and the kitchen became busier than a hive when the Queen Bee enters. The kids especially enjoyed themselves weaving between the tables making sure that everyone was fed. As dessert was being served the St John Cake was distributed and the coins found by two happy newcomer families who went home with \$25 food vouchers. As the first wave finished their meal and moved from the tables the second wave moved in to take their places and the band played on! The kids and their adult assistants kicked back into action and quickly the second serving was completed. In all over 140 people joined in the celebration – a worthy testament and celebration of 25 years of St John's.



Someone call the fire department!

A week later a much quieter marking of the 25 years of St John's took place after the Sunday Liturgy when the Board of the Mission and the parish made a presentation to Fr Roberto in recognition of all he has done in the past 25 years. Metropolitan Nicholas, our bishop, also sent a beautiful letter in recognition of Fr Roberto. Jeannie who has been around the Mission for most of the last 25 years was presented with a bouquet in honour of all she has done at the Mission. FDP



Special Thank You's

To those who supported our Winter Programs including:

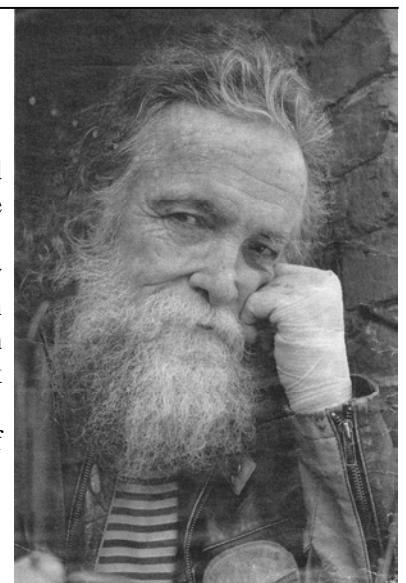
Youth Group of Christ the Saviour Sobor in Ottawa
St George Antiochian Orthodox Church
St Nektarios Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Church
Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church
St Panteleimon Greek Orthodox Church
St Joseph of Arimathea Orthodox Church
St Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, Glebe Road United Church
St George and St Rueiss Coptic Orthodox Church
St Silouan the Athonite Mission
The Meeting House, Meet Market Adventures
DS Communications Group, Jack Layton and Staff
Tina Zaravinos and all the individuals who volunteered and who adopted families at Christmas

Cops Convicted in Beating

For years Richard drove our "putt-putt" the name our of 1st Bakery Van - received because it could never go beyond 40km/hr. He was a good and faithful volunteer and he and Fr Roberto would share stories of "**Braveheart**" and compare beard colours.

Richard made the headlines in the Star and other news pages for successfully winning a case against the police who assaulted him; (meaning: broken ribs, broken finger, dislocated shoulder, scrapes and bruises) last April, 2010 outside his home on Gerrard St East. The Police tried to accuse Richard (who is disabled) of being drunk when they beat him up but this was proven as false.

Richard's case is not unique but because of being stubborn and of "**Braveheart**" Scottish stock he did not stop until the truth was exposed to the light.



St John the Compassionate Mission

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