



ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER September 2012

A Busy Summer

Since our last newsletter, the Mission has been a very busy place. As this newsletter is written, we are wrapping up the last of three youth camps at St Mary of Egypt Refuge. These camps included children/youth both from the city and country areas around the Refuge, a joint collaboration between Coptic and Orthodox Churches as well as



Luc and his team 2012

community youth & volunteers, the camps were a great success. A special thank you goes out to Luc Lafond who helped the youth learn how to use tools, build and survive in the woods, teaching the youth these lost skills and a 50 foot flame bonfire. The parish youth also built a new iconostasis.

Kettle of Fish, Food for Families Program, entered into full swing with its educational programs, hosting several workshops and activities for adults and families. These educational programs are part of a wide effort to get families to stop relying on food bank handouts and be more self-reliant in accessing great, cheap and nutritious foods.

Every week the regular meal times brought together new and old guests - breaking bread is a tradition that does not stop during the summer. At our round tables, we experience the greatness of being human. Breaking bread together in a spirit of communion. Feeding body and soul.

This summer all kinds of groups have visited the Mission; among them Youths from Pennsylvania and other USA states that are part of our Carpatho-Russian Diocese. Each group brought with them a fresh enthusiasm that helped make the oppressive heat more bearable.

We are now preparing for the Fall and look forward to more beautiful memories and lots of unplanned challenges.



Child labour?

The first step is in the potato field...

The Mission's vision is to live and teach that whenever possible it is best to meet our own needs and not to rely on government handouts. Food Banks are both a blessing and a problem. In a move to rely, less on Food Banks the Mission and St Silouan the Orthodox Church under the leadership of Laurentiu Albu took this spring a bold first step towards feeding ourselves. We planted potatoes in a field at Queensborough. We hope that the rest of the year this garden will grow to include more variety of vegetables.

The project was placed under the Patronage of St Phocas, Patron of Gardeners. Since the start, it has been a community event, drawing people from Toronto and as far as Japan and Romania. We wait with great anticipation of what promises to be, a rich harvest towards the middle of September. The crop should meet our needs for the coming winter months. L.A.



The field

Jesus and the spuds



The potato

The volunteers





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Silver Jubilee

September 2012

Dear friends and supporters of our community,

As you can see, the Mission does not take time off. This summer, the Mission has expanded and started new initiatives.

These are certainly very difficult times especially for the poor. It's a sad irony that this is also the time when most charities are pulling back rather than reaching out more to those in need.

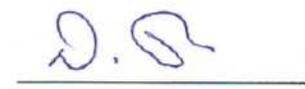
Please helps us help families and individuals not lose hope.
Help us continue reach out to people with dignity and respect.

This is a grace filled time to experience the truth of God's word that what is shared in love we receive a hundred full back.

The leadership team,


Fr. Roberto


Presbytera Maria


Deacon Pawel

New Volunteers at St John's

by Megan Clark, guest from Saskatoon

Tao Lin is 33 years old, and has been volunteering at the Mission for the past month. He immigrated from China less than 3 months ago for Canada's atmosphere and freedom of communication. Tao had never been to Canada before, and has never travelled outside Toronto in Canada.



In China, he worked with computers as an "IT guy" in the Social Institution office of the provincial government. Since it is difficult to transfer his credentials to Canada, he has applied for a Computer Systems Technician 2-year course at George Brown.

Tao's wife returned to China 2 months ago with their 3-year-old son, Ken, to take a university exam. Tao lives with his sister-in-law, who can show him around Toronto, but he still finds himself lonely.

This loneliness and a desire to improve his English led Tao to seek out volunteering opportunities – online, of course, since computers are his domain. He saw the Mission's poster online, and thought it would be an interesting place to come. Tao says he thinks the Mission is useful for society, saying, "I can help people who are helpless, hopeless." He says there is "no discrimination here". He says he likes the atmosphere at the

Mission. He says his main challenge in volunteering at the Mission is communicating with others, since his first language is Mandarin.

As a volunteer, Tao is very helpful and cheerful. I watched him carefully complete whichever tasks were needed. Tao would be first to notice a spill on a table then wipe it up.

Tao says his goals for the next few years are to continue volunteering at St. John's, to graduate college, and to find a job. He wants to visit Alberta and Manitoba for their job opportunities during their economic boom, and he thinks he and his family might end up living in a small prairie city.

As a visitor to the Mission, I was inspired by Tao's helpful and willing spirit in a new country with a foreign language. I hope Tao experiences success with his career, and that he continues to both give and receive at the Mission.



Jeff has been volunteering at the Mission every Friday for the past month. He left his job of over 5 years in sales distribution in the corporate sector a few months ago because he did not like the atmosphere of the corporate world. He said that people in the corporate world want more the more they get, and so they're never satisfied. Some workshops he's been taking since he left his job led him to volunteering.

Jeff chose St. John's as a volunteering opportunity because of the food. He loves to cook, and even once worked as a cook. He sees hunger as an issue in the community, and liked the idea of gathering people together around food, which he described with the saying "Let's break bread together". Although Jeff and his partner Kelly have lived in the neighbourhood for 18 years, Jeff knew of the St. John's bakery but had not previously heard of the Mission and the thrift store. The Mission was a new opportunity to address hunger – both physical and spiritual – in his own community.

He says volunteering at the Mission has given him insight, and that the Mission is "really needed". He says that St. John's gives people many things they need: food, socialization, a sense of community, and simply a chance to be heard. He says, "I find people here very inviting." He volunteers in a variety of



roles, wherever he's needed. He says he finds his main challenges in his volunteering are the unpredictable nature of the work with its inevitable ebbs and flows, as well as finding ways to be helpful among people who have been involved at the Mission for a long time and have settled into their roles.

Jeff is good at getting involved wherever needed, be it washing dishes, serving food, wiping tables, visiting, or whatever other task needs doing. I saw him playfully and gently tease other volunteers. I think he has settled into the Mission very well.

Jeff worked as a distributor for the United Church for over 18 years and enjoyed working in the non-profit sector. He hopes to find a job soon, and although he's had several interviews, he says it's a slow market. He enjoys tennis, cycling, and socializing. Jeff plans on continuing to help in whatever way is needed at St. John's.



Leo in fresco at the Mission

Memory Eternal

Leo Graham began his life at the Mission over 11 years ago as a guest at our table. Soon after his early visits, where he was “volunteered” to help wash dishes, Leo was given the responsibility of delivering our bread. Later during the “Harris” years, Leo led a team of volunteers numbering over 250 each week for over four years.

After retiring, Leo continued to visit the Mission and break bread with us. He was one of the guest speakers during our Donors’ Dinner in June. On July 18th, 2012 Leo went to be with the Lord. Through our prayers and story telling, Leo’s memory continues to be alive

among the Mission. He is painted in the fresco depicting the multiplication of loaves that overlooks the Mission hall. We look forward to meeting with Leo in the joy of the One he believed and served well.

Romero House & St John’s

In June a meeting was held with Mary Jo Leddy, founder of Romero House and the Leadership Team of the Mission to workout an agreement of co-operation. In a common spirit of answering the plight of refugees in Canada; especially against the backdrop of the present repressive and unjust policies of the Federal Government. We committed to house refugees who find themselves homeless.



This is a new venture for the Mission.

Already we have stories to write about the richness and experience of each person that we have received as a priceless blessing for all of us. D.P.

Le Pain de la France et Le Pain de la Canada

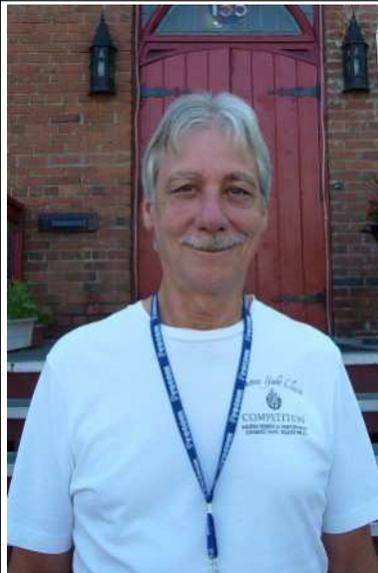
Jean Marie took three weeks off his busy schedule from France to help us perfect St John’s Bakery recipes. We did not only learn bread techniques, but most important, the spirit of baking bread that encompasses love of one another and our commitment to grow in the spiritual life...



Jean Marie



Bakers



Stars of the Mission

Bob Barker has been for the last 6 months the mentor, guardian and amazing guide to all our volunteers. Great job Bob!



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