



# ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER Autumn 2014

## OWL Camps 2014: A Day in the Life

**C**rack of dawn. Thomas and Debbie herd chickens, early risers all.

“Let my prayer arise in thy sight” as the morning mist off the glassy pane of Black River. Rise and shine to the tune of a Brahms Hungarian dance or a Mozart minuet, Ksenia on piano and Opale on violin.

To the garden, where we harvest lunch. Hamish drives a hard bargain over cucumbers and green beans, but Ulysses eats only things round or things orange. We spy the reproductive behaviour of tomatoes and zucchini caught shameless in the act. Potato beetles strut the stage, staging an exhibition of a beetle’s life’s stages.

Barbara, five, sage and engaged in primordial recollection, vividly renders *The Sixth Day of Creation* - tempera, sparkles, Elmer’s Glue on paper plate.

Nichita and Kevin duel at soccer, billiards, and everything else. Nicolas, seven, charges through brush and bramble and up the foothills of manhood - or rather, gentleman-hood; brother Simon, five, hustles after with a backward glance.

Painted warriors streak through forest and swamp, deep in hostile

territory. Rory glides sure and swift through his natural habitat. Daniel and Max create a diversion. Sophia and Gabby, eyes on the prize, make a break for it. Capture the Flag is no game.

A new canoe. A battery of new canoes, and kayaks in fact. We drill some technique. There’s Anna, J-stroking with the best of them. Olivia commands the loyalty of her crew. “Sweep left.” Looking good. Good enough to try on the water.

A flotilla. An armada. An expedition to Porcupine Falls. Something surreal is cooking in The Cauldron there. Upstream: cliffs for scaling, and green sludge for marinating in. Downstream: rocks and rapids to overcome. Where to? The next set of rapids, and then another, and back again.

Fresh pasta. Homemade, handmade. Flour. Oil. Eggs. Salt.



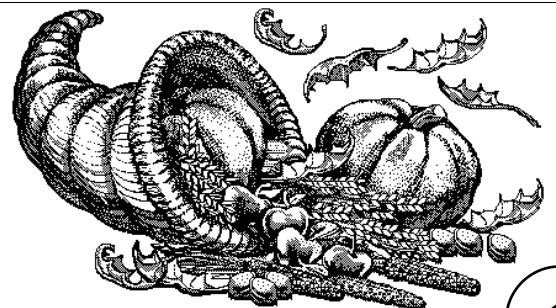
There’s Aaron guiding the gang in the wrong direction

Sweat. We get a feel for farfalle. Farfalle fulfillment there follows.

Meditation. “How manifold are Thy works, O Lord...” Fr. Roberto draws back the veil on the face of God. Ana shows us how to replicate its image.

continued on p. 4

*Please remember the Mission in your will.  
You can't take it with you!  
Memorial Dinners offered in  
Memory of a loved one.*



## The Bread Pudding Extravaganza

**A**s a volunteer, I have been lucky enough to have helped out in many areas of the Mission. None has been so challenging as assisting in the kitchen, and being able to see what the chefs have to deal with when it comes to planning meals.

One day, we had quite a bit of extra bread. We had a number of volunteers cut the bread into large chunks, and our chef had an idea to make a sweet bread pudding for dessert the next day. Because so many were involved, and it was done so very quickly, the fact that the bread was to be used as a dessert was not passed along, and a couple of onion/olive loaves made their way into the mix.

I assisted the head chef in preparing the milk/egg/cinnamon/raisin mixture. Just before we poured it into the chafing dishes of bread, we noticed some large brown/black pieces in some of the chunks, which we soon realized were olives. There was no way of finding out which pieces were from the olive loaves without trying each piece, since they look like other types of bread from the bakery. We both felt disheartened, but I wanted to remain positive, especially because I have great faith in the skills of our chef.

We sifted through the bread chunks and removed the pieces with the obvious olives in them. Then the chef suggested we add chocolate chips to the mix, in the hopes that the sweetness of the chocolate would drown out the savoury flavour of the onions and olives. I ran to the basement and found large chocolate pieces in our freezer, but they had to be broken down into smaller pieces. I double bagged the chocolate, and went outside with the bag and started beating it furiously with a rolling pin. As I was doing that, a City of Toronto truck passed by, and the driver yelled out "is it dead yet?" I just laughed and kept going. I then had our in-house counsellor beat the bag more with a brick, since my arms were now so tired, and that finally seemed to do the trick.

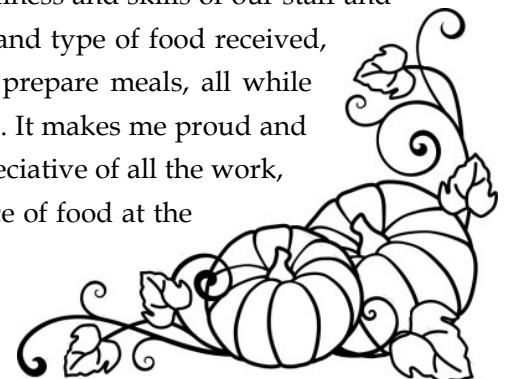
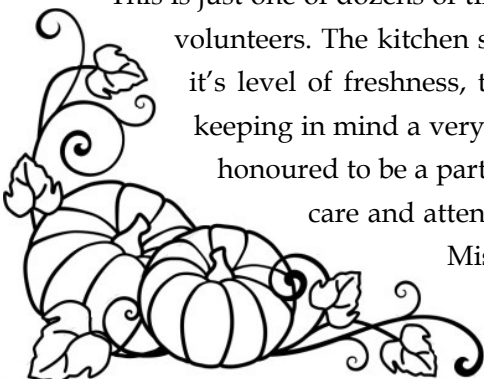
We added the chocolate pieces to the trays of bread, covered with brown sugar, more cream and cinnamon, and left them in the fridge overnight to soak. The chef and I then made a \$1.00 bet – if it turned out well, I would win – if it didn't, she would win. Even though I tried to remain positive, I'll admit I was concerned that we had created some strange onion/olive/cinnamon/raisin type pudding that would just taste weird.

The next day, I couldn't wait to see how the concoction turned out. The chef told me that she baked them and that they smelled good, but we wouldn't know for sure what it would taste like until we tried it at lunch. What the chef did not know was that I talked to 5 or 6 people, and asked them to tell the chef how wonderful it was, regardless of how it tasted. This just added to the humour of the entire situation.

Luckily, it ended up tasting great, and even though the 5 or 6 people did indeed tell the chef it was wonderful, many others complimented it as well. Afterwards, I couldn't keep my little secret to myself, and told the chef that I had asked others to compliment the dish, but that it actually didn't matter, because her creation was fantastic.

This is just one of dozens of times I have seen the competence, resourcefulness and skills of our staff and volunteers. The kitchen staff have to constantly juggle the amount and type of food received, it's level of freshness, the manpower needed to wash, chop and prepare meals, all while keeping in mind a very limited amount of fridge and freezer space. It makes me proud and honoured to be a part of this group, and I am personally so appreciative of all the work, care and attention that go into the preparation and service of food at the Mission.

And I won the \$1.00 bet!



## Breaking Bread

**W**ednesday night supper - the place is crowded. Robert, one of the teenagers has just broken bread and we prayed. I take my place at one of our round tables. The man across from my plate looks like he is presiding at a maximum security canteen. He gulps his soup, keeps staring across at me, cracks his knuckles, clenches his fists and starts a musical of burping. Joe who sits next to him frowns for a second and goes back to talking to himself interrupted only by a nervous laugh directed at something or someone on the ceiling. The couple to my right, the man has only one eye, and they speak of a volunteer who left seven years ago apparently with a grudge against me. Tom on my left goes into his whole life story of how from successful business man to how he ended up on the street, thanks to drugs and alcohol. Before dessert they all leave and now new people sit. Yeni tells me one of our regulars is now on a photo shoot with Putin! Tracy refuses the food plate offered to her by the kitchen and ends up stealing the plate of the man sitting beside me. When he gets another plate she decides to give him back the first and take the one he now has. The man gently obliges I wish everyone a good evening. As I leave the table, I bump into a man who has no shirt and whose pants barely reach his bum. He is looking for the man who talked to himself; he is fresh out of jail. I get ready to give a talk on Orthodox Mission to the Parish.

*Fr Roberto*



*"Yeni tells me one of our regulars is now on a photo shoot with Putin!"*

### Needs List

- Dry Lentils
- Fresh Fruit
- Fresh Vegetables
- Tomato Sauce
- Canned Tomatoes
- Tomato Paste
- Dried Beans
- Canned Tuna
- Couscous
- Baked Beans
- Quinoa/Bulgar Wheat
- Snack Bars
- Diapers (4-6) (Adult L-XL)
- Dish Soap
- Laundry Soap
- Bleach/Vinegar Cleaning
- Baby Wipes
- Tea Towels
- Water Pitchers

**Winter Breakfast Program to Start Early this Season!**  
**Monday November 3rd @ 5am**



## The Sound of Music

**I** just want to share a moment that I experienced at the mission this month. A person walked in and asked to talk to a counsellor. I met the person and we went together to the room upstairs. We talked for almost half an hour. I listened for most of the time saying just a few words. When people speak about their suffering listening just happens. You do not need any skills for that. After listening I remained quiet for the following 15 minutes because the person said: "Could I play something for you on my guitar?" She played three songs. She sang about life, suffering, faith and redemption and St. Peter. The songs were beautiful and painful, just like her life.

She promised that she would come back to play the songs for all the people at the mission. If she reads this story I want her to know that we are looking forward to hear her singing so we can listen and cry and listen again.

*Nicolaie*



Nicolaie, certified counsellor

### Did you Know that:

The counselling program at St John's is done by a certified counsellor, it is free and it starts at 7:00 am on Thursdays. For special requests it can start earlier.

Other days for this program are Wednesday in the afternoon till evening and Fridays (walk in) from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at least.

Just ask a question. Any question. 416-476-6659

continued from p. 1

Joel directs a choir of angels. Dn. Pawel elevates our minds in lofty contemplation of the meaning of bread.

Labour. Luc builds a team of builders. Sarah, Sophie, Sidney and company hit the nail on the head.

A makeshift raft, made in shifts. Maiden voyage, Johan at the helm. Alastair, with marauding band, commandeers a sinking vessel - christened Titanic II, eager to join its namesake.

A hike in the woods. Wild blackberries from Four Cow Meadow will go great with Bernard's pancakes at breakfast next morning. For now, onward to Queensborough Creek. There's Aaron guiding the gang in the wrong direction, and Allysha saying I told you so. Romanos under Johan's tutelage, map in one hand, compass in the other, gets us there, nearly.

Bannock on a stick, sticky with maple syrup and roasted raisins. Alfred, sated and elated, waxes poetic by the campfire light. Later, he meets his match when he and Robert meet for a match of chess.

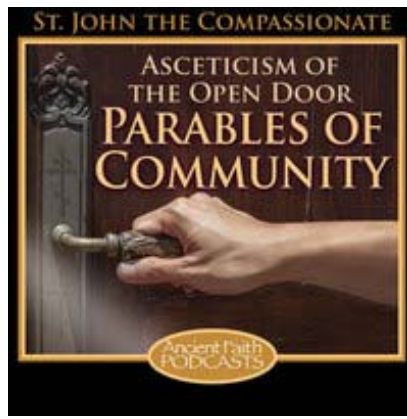
And all the while, we dance. Under the stars, or under the searing sun... Ulysses, lover of music and stealer of hearts, waltzes Opale to exhaustion. Claire grooves a move with attitude. Agnes kicks it Kung Fu-style. Jagger's juiced up on vitamin J; he brought enough to go around.

Fireside fireworks vie with the crackling starlight. Mosquitos press screens, whining their bloodthirsty lullaby.

The day's heavy impress presses us in deep rest. We steep in the sleep of the Blessed.

*Aaron*

"For info about OWL Youth Camps, contact Aaron at [youthcamps@stmarysrefuge.org](mailto:youthcamps@stmarysrefuge.org)"



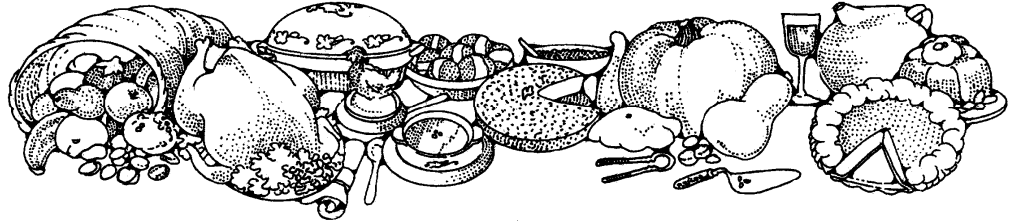
## Ancient Faith Radio

We have launched our new series of podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio titled: **Parables of Community - Asceticism of the Open Door.**

This is a series of illustrations and reflections of life in community. These parables of community are to illustrate the kingdom of God hidden in the noise and busyness of daily life.

We hope you will listen and share.

W: [ancientfaith.com/podcasts/parables](http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/parables)



## Harvesting Time at St. Mary of Egypt Refuge

I was wondering how much people are willing to pay these days for the most expensive restaurant in the world. I invite any of those food aficionados to St. Mary of Egypt Refuge to eat from our precious garden. Father Roberto, Ashley, Sharon, Marley, Olga and Tania cook fresh and organic products delivered from our garden by Julio, Aaron, Sebastian, Chiara, David, Evelyne, Steve, Pat, Ron, Johan and many other adults and children who spent some time in the garden or around the chickens this year. There is only one catch: you must labor in our garden before breaking bread.

There is a quote from scripture that best describes our activities in the garden of Saint Phocas for this year.



Julio at the harvest

"And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." (Mark 4: 26-29)

Those who helped in the garden in the spring will remember that these seeds came from envelopes and after a few

months, we harvested by the bushels plenty for St. Mary of Egypt Refuge and our brothers and sisters at St John the Compassionate to enjoy. Truly only God could be that generous. How else to return our blessings if not by celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the Chapel of Saint Joachim and Ana at the Refuge.

Adam's curse of the ground has become joy into Saint Phocas garden. Come and see!

*Laurentiu*

## St John the Compassionate Mission

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