

ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER Summer 2012

The miracle of the loaves and fishes



“Ted the Fisherman from Angus, Ontario” moved by our fight with the City of Toronto’s new garbage fee, donated a truck load of fish for the Mission. Here is Qmars, our cook, welcoming the fish to the Mission!



What began as a few loaves of bread 25 years ago has now grown to be one of Canada’s most successful Social Enterprises. We now feed all our people with our bread. Over 4500 baked every week.



And here is Jesus Olivares eating the loaves & fishes. Jesus is from Columbia and a miracle worker in all aspects of our Mission Life.



Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I saw the series about homelessness in the inner city on 100 Huntley Street last week. It was great beginning about this life: a life that is difficult to experience, a life that is all too easily seen as hopeless by both those who must live on the street and those who work with them. There is a missing part that is never mentioned to people that God would want to be those who would extend the help to people on the street and that is: people on the street could literally be your mother, father, brother or sister. There is really literally no separation between 'them' and 'us'.

I have experienced life in a woman's shelter for five consecutive months. When I entered the shelter, I had little choice about it. I thought in terms of 'them' and 'me'. I felt that I was better than the others; I am not a psychiatric patient, not a sex trade worker, have not spent my life on the street. After a time God showed me that all the women there are my sisters, with many more similarities than differences. All of us are broken in one way or another: brothers and sisters as you are broken, too. God is present for all of us: God want everybody not to be afraid of

loving Him and be free to love each other. One missing factor in street life is trust: how is trust possible if a sleeping place is unknown? How can trust be possible in an environment in which one cannot carry any cash? If others realize that a person does have some cash, that



cash will be stolen. I have witnessed this, and it happens time and time again.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr. said once, 'We do not remember the words of our enemies; we remember the silence of our friends'. How can we break this silence? Are you silent? I have been silent when I should have done what little I can to break the silence.

Sometimes it is more comfortable not to do so. Never forget that our Lord was homeless. He wants a home in our hearts, minds and bodies. When the silence is broken, we give him a home.

What can you do to break this silence? I ask that if you see a panhandler on the street-don't walk by. Give the individual a few minutes of your time. Get to know her/his name. Whether you give, money is up to God and to you. Talking and befriending somebody is more powerful than handing a person a five-dollar bill and walking away.

All of us can become homeless. That can happen to anyone. I did own a condo and believed that I was secure and ended up without a place to live. It seems there is little that one person can do: never forget that one of the greatest feedings began with just five loaves and two fishes. All our actions start from one small act.

God bless you; please don't forget that there is no 'us' and 'them'. God wants all to be brothers and sisters. The person who you see could literally be your brother, father, sister or your mother.

Catherine Archer

What do the Embassies and St John's Mission have in common?

Apparently lots!

Bob Ford feels that both agencies are in the same category and need to start paying their share of garbage collection.

On April 25, 2012, Mr. Peter Tabuns, MPP for the Mission's riding of Toronto- Danforth, made this statement in the house of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "St. John the Compassionate Mission, a charitable organization in my riding, provides a free meal program and supports a wide range of programs for marginalized and vulnerable individuals in a community setting. They operate a wholesale bakery and thrift shop, to provide dignity, work experience and training for men and women, many of whom are homeless or on social assistance.

They are asking that the Ontario Works program that allows recipients an additional \$100 month if they volunteer, with the intention to assist in preparation for the workforce, be extended permanently to recipients who, for a variety of reasons, will never be able to return to the workforce.

It's our responsibility to ensure that vulnerable individuals on Ontario Works, who may not be able to participate in the workforce, have access to additional income and supports. By these means, we allow them to participate in their communities in a volunteer capacity. This often gives great meaning to their lives.

Speaker, we should support the initiative of St. John the Compassionate Mission and ensure that meaning is not taken away from the lives of those who are far less fortunate than those of us in this chamber."

On behalf of St. John the Compassionate Mission, thank you Peter, for bringing attention to this issue to our legislature.

A Parable

based on a true story with the City of Toronto

A benevolent monarch gave a man an enormous wealth. The man lived in the only mansion in the land and the monarch wanted this man to be in his image and likeness and distribute the wealth, so that all may come to know the love of the monarch.

But this rich and blessed man began to think that he had received this wealth because he was different from the rest of mankind and that he must have deserved it. So he started to treat it as his own. He made rules and laws that would allow him to take the little wealth others had to increase his own wealth. He called this new order "The Economy." It really was a new religion, based on faith not empirical reality. This faith was made on rules the rich man made up to benefit himself.

The rich man had a son who was not well. The rich man tried to forget he had such a son... a loser and lazy boy, he thought. Often he would not even feed his son.

One day a poor woman from another country came and started, at her own expense, to feed this son. She would also look after him and help him find work. She cleaned the rich

man's house, all at her own personal expense. The rich man never noticed the woman. He was too busy with The Economy.

Then a severe famine came upon the land, and the rich man noticed that he could not get as much money from people any more. In order to preserve his opulent lifestyle, he looked to see how he could save money.

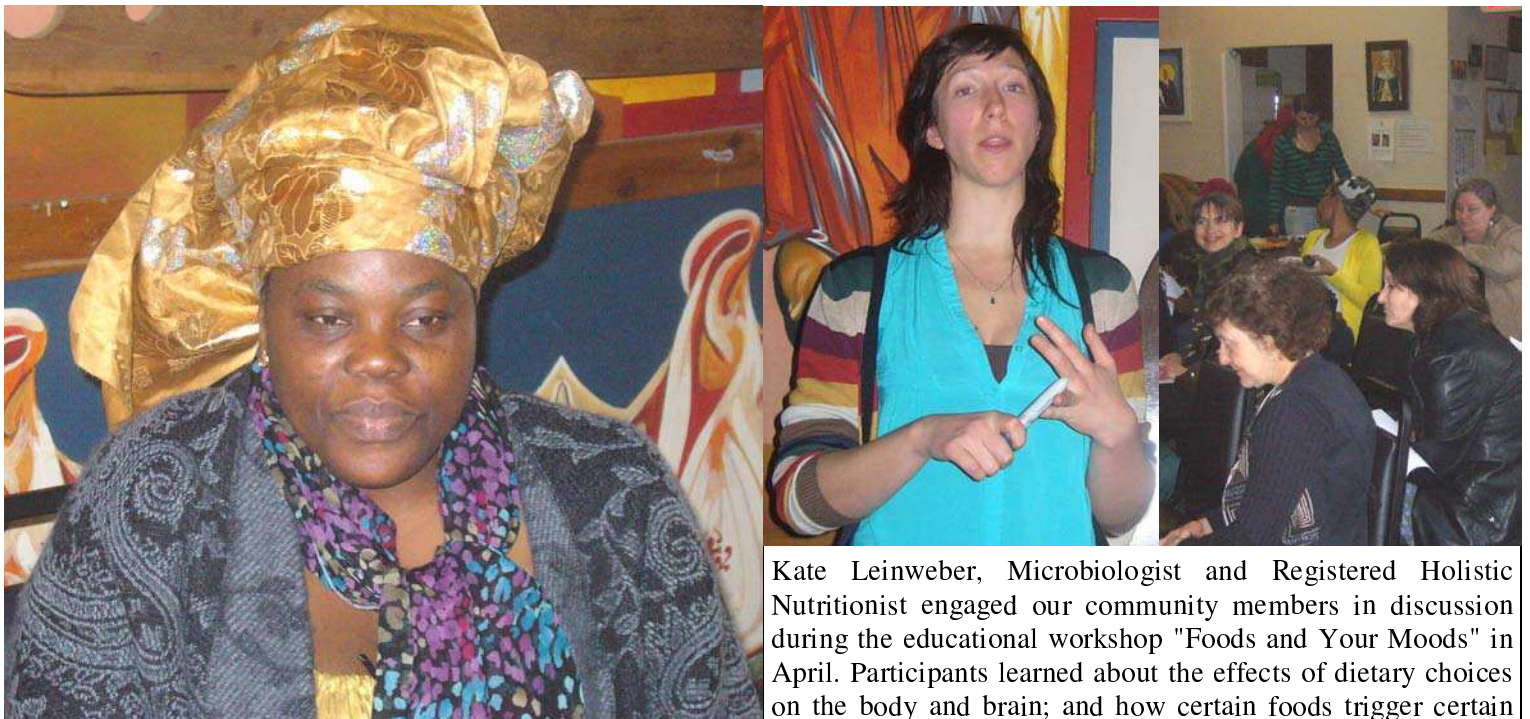
He would not give up his house, or a vacation, or his car. But as he looked around, he noticed that his son was being fed by a poor widow and that it cost him money to dispose of some of the garbage this woman made when she fed his son. So he told the woman to start paying for every piece of garbage.

But the woman said, "If I do this then I won't be able to buy any more food for your son." The rich man, who was a **good** economist, said: "Times are tough and everyone has to share the pain. Besides," he said, "I can do what you do cheaper. I will hire a company to feed my son and they will pay for the garbage pickup."

And that is what he did. Only the company wanted to cut costs, too, and so did not feed the son, who after all was just a lazy bum.

This proved to be a very solid business plan that pleased the economy and the rich man. Until the day he came home and found that the son had burned his house down and all his wealth trying to fry an egg for himself because he was hungry.

F.R.



Julie (above) may have been an African Princess, but she certainly was successful as a Social Worker Student during this past winter.

Kate Leinweber, Microbiologist and Registered Holistic Nutritionist engaged our community members in discussion during the educational workshop "Foods and Your Moods" in April. Participants learned about the effects of dietary choices on the body and brain; and how certain foods trigger certain moods. "Foods and Your Moods" is part of a new 6 month health initiative called "Passport to Health" put-on in partnership with Margaret's Community Housing and Support Services and 6 St Joseph.

St John's Academy - Update

Has been blessed with a very productive term, and as we end the year, we can reflect on the many successes of our students. Two of our secondary math students, Sara and Yasamean, have shown solid improvements in their academic math test scores. Their struggles to master the complex concepts in algebra were alleviated by the exceptional tutoring skills of their volunteer tutor, Michele. Of course, all tutors have been fantastic in their connection with the students they work with. Thank you to all the tutors for your amazing dedication and willingness to share your skills.

Another success story occurred with Rathesh Balendran, a Gr. 8 student from Lord Dufferin PS. Rathesh, after a long and detailed application process, was awarded a full scholarship to a private preparatory high school, The Abelard School, in Toronto. The scholarship, with a value of \$19,000, will allow Rathesh to study in a very demanding and challenging academic program

geared for university. He continues to require tutoring from Sylvia (who is an amazing tutor!) to improve his vocabulary and writing skills, but he is highly motivated and determined to succeed. I know he will excel at Abelard.

We will have the pleasure of honoring our tutors, and recognizing our students, at the annual dinner for St. John's Academy; to be held Thursday June 21st at 7:00 PM. Parents will have the opportunity to prepare a favourite dish for the potluck dinner, as their way of saying thank you for the efforts of the volunteers. I look forward to seeing students, parents, tutors and guests at this special event.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to all the donors, who make this program available to children from low-income families, who otherwise may not get

extra help in Math or English. In a time when cutbacks are the norm, it is refreshing to see that these donors acknowledge the importance of this after-school tutoring program.



We welcome new students, so if you know a student who would benefit from this program, kindly direct them to St. John's Academy. Have a great summer everyone. Both Saraswati, Director



A Different Type of Food Bank

The vision of the Mission is not to create dependence on handouts and all the judgment that comes from society with this.

Food accessibility is a basic human need. This year we took the first step towards feeding our community by planting potatoes and other vegetables at St Mary's refuge. The potatoes were a donation of St Nectarius Orthodox Church. The seedlings came from the Mennonite farmers in St Jacobs Ontario.

The planting was a community event with people and friends from the Mission and St Silouan Orthodox Church. We hope and pray that the harvest will allow us to meet our needs and the families we serve during the coming winter.



The New Gospel?

Economics is a man-made faith with man-made rules and laws, and is not based on any empirical reality. Today it claims itself as the only standard where all things are valued. Markets, stocks, taxes, property laws, are for the most part operationally logical but function irrationally. These are man-made rules to serve, mostly, those who are not poor. Greed is by nature blind it can act even against its own interests....

F.R.

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