



ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE NEWSLETTER Summer 2016

New Mission Outreach in Scarborough

On February 2, 2016, St John the Compassionate Mission opened a new "Mission" in Scarborough. Its official name is "Good Neighbours."

This new mission is located at the heart of a growing neighbourhood, mostly made up of immigrants from all parts of the world. In Scarborough, there are no real neighbourhoods, but rather apartment blocks facing each other, separated only by distance. Our particular area has three such towers and one more being built, giving us access to a large group of people within less than a kilometer.

We looked for those who are the working poor, those who don't make it on the radar of social assistance, where there are no social services, and food access is a challenge. After several years of looking and praying, we were led to our new home.

Our approach is the same as when the Mission started on Blake Street thirty years ago. We try to establish relationships with people that foster a sense of mutuality, rather than charity. At our common weekly meals, people not only come to break bread together, but oftentimes bring something to be shared with others. We run a lending library, infant exchange group and children's after-school program. It's all on the "small" scale, making sure that whatever we do comes out of a desire to be present and to share in the lives of our neighbours.

The stories of people's lives that we are privileged to hear and hold confirm this sense that it is good for us to

be there. For now, we are just trying to build a sense of home, a place where neighbours feel welcome and like a part of our household.

Without sounding too optimistic, we have already seen how important and even transforming it can be for newcomers to have a place where they can feel useful and part of a community.

Kalima came to us the first time hoping to exchange some of her infant clothes. Within minutes, she started to pour out her difficult and painful story. As she continued coming, her appearance began to change and an inner beauty and strength appeared. She brings to us not only need and suffering, but also beauty, inspiration, and strength.

The chapel that is at the heart of our new Mission is the place where we bring each person's story and life, offering them to God and interceding for the good of each and every one who comes to us. The Mission in Scarborough has always felt like, from the very moment we discovered it, a blessing.

Fr Roberto



Kalima & child



Working with the Hands

I started working at St John's Bakery in September 2014 and was really excited for the opportunities. I had previous experience working with bread when I worked in a café in North Toronto. This place was different from what I was used to. The recipes came from Brittany, France and we are working with a cultured mother.



What struck me here is that St John's is a non-profit organization. We work within St John the Compassionate Mission. With our leftover breads, we were not wasting it; instead the Mission takes it for the people in need.

The bakery changed a lot since I first started. We struggled with our breads and we were in a real crisis. We're lucky that we held up and I'm happy to see this place change for the better. We have a bigger clientele, beautiful bread coming out everyday, our scones are selling fast and the atmosphere is incredible. Now, we have volunteers coming and we're able to share our skills. It helps them in the future to find a job in this industry or even start a job here at the Bakery.



Cyprien

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



Edward the Peace Maker

It's hard not to bump into Edward at the Mission because he is everywhere. Working in the kitchen, setting up tables, cutting butter for scones in the Bakery or helping make the bread for church, walking with the people on Tuesdays and this is to name just a few of the things he does. But the thing that he enjoys the most, as he confessed, is to ring the bells while singing "Christ is Risen". We see here at the Mission that Edward has a gift. He brings peace around him, a peace we didn't know where to look for.

Edward (right) with his friend Sean



Summer Vacation Package

It's not like we were looking for business, for more business, but now since we got here: this is an invitation for everybody to spend a summer in a hot tropical spot in downtown Toronto (more on the East side), our air conditioning free kitchen. A Christian setting atmosphere, where one can get for free anything one needs for salvation: prayer workshop based on an ancient tradition (with immediate effect), real people waiting for you to pray for and with them, a place where you can have your heart touched by every story you hear, starting as early as 5 o'clock in the morning.



Mission at 7:40am

This summer we are trying to keep the mission open for breakfast in the morning, just like we did over the winter. This is not an easy thing to do but we felt there was a big necessity for it for people in our community. Many people who come here for breakfast would not be seen here during the day. Some of these people cannot sleep during the night, others sleep outside and others go to bed really early. Then there are those who sleep in shelters and they get kicked out at 7 a.m. (a couple of years ago a person who used to sleep in shelters told me that those couple of hours after they get kicked out from the shelter are the most difficult of all since no place is open for them so early. You feel completely lost).

It is a good thing for us as well since it helps us break some bad habits. It forces us to come really early in the morning and pray, so it safeguards us from wasting time caught up in the virtual world late at night, a win-win situation, hypothetically.

It has not been too bad so far. The number of people did not decrease (the smallest number we had was 50 and the most people we had was 120 on a busy morning). We had some problems finding enough eggs and bacon, but we survived on canned beans and donated fresh blueberries. However, our sorrow is that too many times people eat alone. It is true we can always use more food donations to survive, but what we truly need are the people who keep the vigil in the morning (praying the Psalter), help in the kitchen and listen to the real stories of the people who get to watch the dawn every single morning. Why should we let them watch it alone? When was the last time we watched the dawn anyway?

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A Flow Kind of Time

“In positive psychology, **flow**, also known as **the zone**, is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.” This is how I would sum up my experience over the course of three seemingly very short, yet full days at St Mary’s Refuge; over the course of the last few days of May. A more beautiful sky and landscape is hard to come by in the bustling Toronto downtown or even uptown, and with a spiritual undertaking amidst an equally energized, joyous and focused group of parishioners it wasn’t hard to lose oneself in what may seem to some as back breaking work. Under the guidance of our fearless farm lead, Laurentiu, we were all ordained with various tasks from tilling the soil with heavy machinery, to fertilizing the ground with, who would have thought it “alfalfa grass”, for seeding the variety of beans (kidney and black), peppers, eggplants, onions, garlic and potatoes. We were also blessed to have the opportunity to plant some cherry trees beside our little chapel and watering them as well as having enough hands on deck (or field, should I say) to setup the irrigation system for the rest of the crop. Amidst the toil there were many

joyful moments shared over delicious meals (hats off to the Chefs for plenteous variety), lounging around inside and not to mention my close encounters of the third kind with the critters of the field. From a tenacious dragonfly that supposed my shoulder the best place to spend its meal time (20 + minutes!) devouring a maggot, to an adult turtle that I learned can also pee itself in fear when picked up and carried briskly off the field (no it’s not just the human variety on thrill rides). As with any meaningful work in God’s service we ended our days with prayer and it truly was something special to behold a Vespers and Divine Liturgy in the midst of nature with the peace and tranquility offered by such a setting. It is this “synergy” of physical and spiritual work intermingling so closely, and sharing the same source of strength as their impetus that enables, I believe, a forward movement to Peace and Harmony among all of creation. If only we can



Julio (left) & Laurentiu (right): working on the greenhouse

learn to find more ways to bring it closer to home, in all that we do.



Chefs in the kitchen

Glory be to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

Alex

Planting in the garden (below)



PRIOR TO Moses was Paul: The PRIOR TO St John's

Paul Tadros joined the staff of the Mission as Prior in January this year (2016). Born and raised in Toronto, he first came to volunteer at St John's back in 2004. On his first visit with a church group he was impressed by what Fr Roberto had said to them about the reason for the life of the Mission. At that time he was a student and later entered the teaching profession. Over the years he progressively got more involved in the life of the Mission and even dedicated certain days of the week to this – giving up the opportunity for supply teaching to do so.



Paul (left) with Naomi (right) & Moses (centre)

The Lived Theology School came to play a significant role in his life, as through LTS he met Naomi (one of the first LTS interns) who became his wife in 2014. Naomi and Paul worked together in a number of programs including Food for Families and Kidz Klub, which Naomi started as part of an intentional move on the part of the Mission to reach out to families.

Paul's life experience led him to see the life as lived at the Mission as a real way of living out a faith centred on compassion and reaching out to a suffering and needy world. In fact, he would go as far as to say that a faith which does not do that is not a real faith at all.

Paul and Naomi are raising their son Moses actively and deliberately so that living with and among the poor is normal and not a novelty. It seems to be working as Moses has become a regular face at the Mission with his own fan club!

Of his role as Prior, Paul sees himself as an aid – not a boss – to the community and those who come to and belong to it. He most likes being with the people; living life with them on a daily basis like a family. He knows who will be there on any given day and looks forward to their stories and humour. Even their jokes!

Fr Dn Pawel

The Mission is experiencing a need for the following items, if there is any way you can help us we pray that God may richly reward and bless you.

Urgent Needs:

- Milk (fresh, powdered), Coffee, Juice
- Eggs and margarine
- Fresh potatoes, onions, carrots,, apples, oranges

- Herbs and spices and pepper
- Dried beans and lentils
- Diced tomatoes
- Canned meat, fish, beans, soup, vegetables, fruit
- Aluminium foil (large size)
- Ajax/comet, Bleach, Laundry soap, Vinegar, Dish soap

The people of St John's



Breaking Bread in Scarborough



To our beloved benefactors of our humble community, we will be holding our annual Donors' Dinner on Thursday, September 29, 2016. As many of you know, we normally hold our annual dinner in the month of June, but for logistical reasons we needed to move the date to September for this calendar year. You will receive an invitation to the Donors' Dinner with our next newsletter, which should safely land in your mailboxes toward the end of August. Feel free to go on ahead and book off that evening! We're looking forward to opening our doors and spending a beautiful Fall evening with you. See you then!

Summer vacations continued from page 3

Kevin (left) has a special place at the Mission, a quiet corner that gives him a few hours of sleep. He tried to spend the summer at a farm. He is back with us because he said he could not behave there. Here, he is doing his best, if you don't make too much noise when he gets his nap in the morning.

Fr Nicolaie

St John the Compassionate Mission

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