



## THE LEADING EDGE.... “Edge Thoughts”

**Come to the Edge. *We might Fall.* Come to the edge. *It's too high!*  
**COME TO THE EDGE.** And they came; and he pushed; and they flew.**

Christopher Logue – from *Ode to the Dodo* – Poems from 1953 to 1978  
ARCAN Logo Designed by Phyllis Gallant, CND

### ARCAN MISSION STATEMENT

Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the charisms of each religious congregation the mission of ARCAN is to provide a supportive network committed to adult learning, inclusive actions, embracing diversity, along with an awareness of the new consciousness that all life is sacred and connected.

### ARCAN VISION STATEMENT

The vision of ARCAN is to be a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada living a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spirituality for the 21st century. We inspire to invite one another to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all

A message from the editors:

Welcome to the 2022 Spring edition of our ARCAN Newsletter. We are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations Associate Network)

ARCAN emerged in the hearts of two CND (Congregation of Notre Dame) members in 2002 in Pictou, Nova Scotia. Sr. Alma MacLellan and Associate Peg Madigan had been involved in their CND Associate relationship for many years. They wondered if other congregations in Atlantic Canada were experiencing the same excitements and growing pains as they were. This was the catalyst for the ARCAN network.

ARCAN is a committed network of Sisters and Associates within Atlantic Canada that draws from the inspiring traditions of each religious congregation and the deep and enduring spring of Gospel values.

We are profoundly enriched and mutually supported by one another's vibrant charisms. And we honour the past and welcome the future with a wide and loving embrace. Our common geography, cultures, history, experiences and futures draw us together and provides companionship for the journey.

There are 8 congregations making up ARCAN: Congregation of Notre Dame; Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish; Sisters of Mercy; Society of the Sacred Heart; Sisters of St. Martha of PEI; Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception; Sisters of Charity of Halifax.

We will over time feature photos of each: This issue introduces the RSCJ Associates.

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## Meet the RSCJ Associates of Halifax

**Back row L to R :** Barbara Martell, Judy Sapp, Colleen Quinn, Patricia Donnelly, Pauline Scott, Susan Atkinson, Peggy Gorman, Donna Dolan RSCJ **Front row L to R :** Patricia Nichols, Suzanne Cooke RSCJ and Norma Heffernan  
**RSCJ Missing :** Sarah Cassidy



## ARCAN Spring Meeting Minutes Recap

The ZOOM meeting began with a Land Acknowledgement. New Steering Committee members were welcomed. The ‘check-in’ section was so uplifting! Associates worked at staying connected in spite of the pandemic. Religious congregations shared many of their current and future plans.

The financial report presented shows the careful spending of funds and financial assets to ensure the organization continues into the future. A list of various books and a website was recommended for member enrichment. A new newsletter committee was struck, consisting of Sarah Cassidy, Barbara Hawley, Dianne MacAskill and Anne Bown.

Former ARCAN executive members Linda Longmire and Ronnie MacDonald completed their terms and stepped down. Julia Townsend and Dianne MacAskill have offered themselves as executive members to the Fall of 2024 and 2025, respectively. They join Anne Bown, who’s term ends in the Fall of 2023.

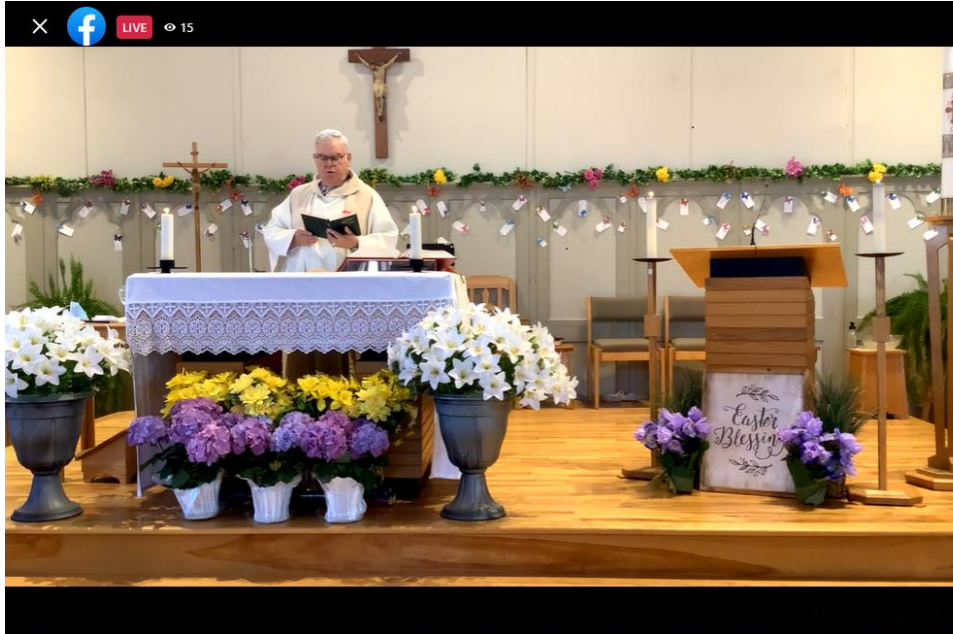
Linda Longmire presented the Saturday morning ZOOM spiritual session on “Spirituality and Healing”. An article on the session is in this newsletter. The session was open to all sisters and associates and was well attended and appreciated.

ARCAN is celebrating 20 years in 2022 and a series of events are occurring during the year. Special bookmarks were printed to be sent to all associates and sisters representing the Congregational members of ARCAN. A budget was presented to the steering committee. The next ARCAN meeting will be a ‘blended’ (Zoom/Face to Face) event on Friday/Saturday Oct 14/15 at the Barat Centre in Halifax.



Anne Bown is a Mercy Associate from St. John's, NL; a member of the ARCAN Steering Committee; a mother of 2 and grandmother of 1 and a retired accountant.

## ARCAN 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mass



A celebration of the Eucharist, an appropriate first event to celebrate ARCAN's 20th Anniversary, took place on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at St. Mary's-Holy Family Parish, Kensington, PEI, with Fr. Frank Jay presiding. Sister Debbie Peters, CSM, PEI, did the welcome and introduction; Yvonne Poirier, PEI Martha Associate, read the scripture passage; Dorena Hall, PEI CND Associate, led the Prayers of the Faithful, and Donna Burke,

parishioner, led the music. Many Sisters and Associates from both congregations on PEI were physically present and others joined by live-stream.

The recording is available at <https://www.facebook.com/1840661703/videos/407403054565961/>.

Over 1100 Sisters and Associates in Atlantic Canada are connected to ARCAN and anniversary celebrations will continue throughout the year with more events of Prayer, Reflection, Learning, Action, and Remembering .

Back row: Sr. Gemma Dunn (CSM Leader), Yvonne Poirier, Sr. Debbie Peters, Sr. Lauretta White, Fr. Frank Jay, Arlene Trainor, Gail MacPhee

Front: Judy Donovan-Whitty, Sr. Frances Johnston, Aline Reid, Liz Murnaghan, Margaret Howard, Anita McGuigan, Dorena Hall



Mary MacLean is a retired teacher, lives in Stratford, PEI, and is the proud mother of four sons, one daughter, and eight wonderful grand children. Mary feels privileged to be an associate of the Sisters of Saint Martha on PEI for ten years and is just ending a six-year term as Associate Co-Coordinator.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ARCANA Reflection Morning of June 7, 2022

About 58 sisters and associates were present at the ZOOM meeting to reflect on the origins and history of ARCANA. This is a brief recap.



The meeting began with ARCANA's founders, Sister Alma MacLellan (Congregation of Notre Dame), living in Sydney Mines, NS and Peggy Madigan (CND Associate) living in Montreal.

Both of these women were instrumental in calling the first meeting of Atlantic associates and sisters in Pictou, NS in 2002 "to support the relationship between associates and sisters." One sister and one associate from each Atlantic congregation were invited.

All sisters and associates discovered that they had similar desires and needs and it was decided to meet regularly. After several meetings, the name Atlantic Religious Congregations Associate Network (ARCANA) was decided upon. The first ARCANA weekend was in May 2007 at Mount St. Vincent in Halifax, NS.

Peggy Madigan elaborated on the May 2007 ARCANA conference. It helped "build a solid foundation" for ARCANA. Benedictine Sister Macrina Wiederkehr was the speaker. The wisdom phrases emerging were: (a) importance of prayer and contemplation, (b) alone we can do little, together much, (c) importance of spending time with senior Sisters, and (d) we don't do happiness, we receive it.

Sister Margie Gillis, a Sister of Charity Halifax, and Peggy Gorman, co-coordinator of Associates of Sisters of Charity, Halifax spoke next. They, along with Cora Shebib (deceased) formed the ARCANA Executive Steering Committee.

Four points summarize Sister Margie's thinking about ARCANA:

- a. Build a network; work and skill are needed.
- b. Emphasize and promote contemporary theology.
- c. Be mindful to inspire leadership; it is the key to maintaining the network.
- d. Remember the principle of mutuality.

Peggy Gorman's first comments were how the 21<sup>st</sup> century is calling us to relationship, how we are crossing boundaries in Association, how we must be conscious of our global communities, the importance of leadership, and the need to witness in prophetic ways. She spoke of the themes of being a supportive network, adult learning, inclusive actions, diversity, and that all Life is sacred.

Peggy reminded us of important aspects of ARCANA Steering Committee meetings: (a) checking-in with individual congregations as part of networking, (b) the importance of prayer at the beginning of and closing of meetings, (c) having social events at meetings, (d) trying to make travel affordable for participants.

During this time the Vision and Mission Statements were finalized, a Strategic Plan created and a request to the eight congregations was successfully made for sustaining funding. A 'blog' called the 'Leading Edge' was also developed. The title was based on the "Edge Principle". The Edge Principle is an ecological term; it means that, when we have two ecosystems such as a marsh and a dry land that come together, the Edge is the most fertile area. When Sisters and Associates come together, they team with life to create a new life.

The Steering Committee met twice a year, usually in Halifax. Conferences for all were held every few years at St. Mary's University. In Newfoundland and Labrador, a Speaker's Session for sisters and associates was

developed as the cost of traveling to Nova Scotia for the conference was often prohibitive. And, in recent years, the cost of running a Nova Scotia conference has resulted in its cancellation.

At one point Sister Margie spoke of the importance of mutual relationship and how it is so important to spend time fleshing it out. One example is that the Executive Committee members begin their new roles on a staggered basis so new members can be supported by those with more experience.

The final speaker was Linda Longmire, a current executive member of the Steering Committee. Linda is a contemplative spiritual director/mentor and an associate of the Marthas of Antigonish. Linda's executive member colleagues were Ronnie MacDonald and Anne Bown.

During the past few years (due to the pandemic) ARCANA has not met in person and has moved to ZOOM meetings. The positive part of this has meant that more sisters and associates can join the Steering Committee's 'spiritual session'.

The blog has evolved to a twice-yearly newsletter which is shared with sisters and associates throughout the ARCANA network. At the Steering Committee meetings, the sisters (in addition to associates) are now invited to share the latest news.

Many congregations are working toward 'completeness' and discussing how to keep the associate movement alive after they have gone. Associate groups are reflecting on how to attract younger members. Things are changing and ARCANA will change with it.

The main emphasis of Linda's presentation was the importance of keeping our awareness of spirituality and our love of God alive. We need to trust in God and remember that the Crucifixion is not the end of the story—Resurrection remains always.



Denise Isaacs is a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, retired nurse and nursing instructor. She belongs to Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish, CWL, Saint John and Area Sponsoring Group (for refugees and new immigrants), and the Regional Coordinator of SCIC Associates in the Saint John area.

## ARCAN 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary –20 Social justice actions

As part of ARCAN's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, we are sharing a list of 20 Social Justice Actions. We are encouraging sisters and associates to perform one or more of these actions individually or in groups.



In this special year we want you to think about our 'common home' and those who live in it. If anyone wants to share about the actions they took, we would love to hear about it at our Fall ARCAN Meeting.

1. Do not purchase individual bottled water.
2. Educate yourself on the teachings of Laudato Si' that everything is connected – that climate change is linked to other social justice and ecological issues.
3. Commit to learning more about three social and environmental justice organizations in your area.
4. Where possible reduce fossil fuel consumption by choosing to walk, use public transportation, or ride a bicycle.
5. Directly support people in your community who need food or support your local Food Bank.
6. Wash clothes in cold water and hang-dry when possible.
7. Through education, advocacy and encounter, connect with migrants/ immigrants or victims of human trafficking.
8. Organize or participate in a beach or community clean up.
9. Start or expand a vegetable or pollinator flower garden.
10. Support local markets that sell local produce and products.
11. Plan meals well to reduce food waste.
12. Learn about issues related to the Indigenous peoples. Become an ally.
13. Become more eco-responsible. Repurpose - Repair – Recycle – Re- evaluate your values system - Reduce your consumption – Re-use goods – Re-distribute resources - Rethink your systems.
14. Keep informed on the platforms of the various political parties regarding social justice and environmental issues.
15. Plant a native tree, or native shrub.
16. Choose bread that comes in a paper bag or no bag.
17. Support the policy of clean water and sanitation as a human right. Write to local and national governments to petition them to implement legislation for clean water and sanitation for all.
18. Advocate for more bike lanes in your community.
19. Install a programmable thermostat and / or use energy-efficient light bulbs.
20. When traveling by plane, donate to a tree planting organization to offset the carbon footprint of your trip.

Suggestions are based on a list originally compiled by the CND 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Associate Relationship Planning Committee.

## Linda Longmire's Spirituality Session

During the ARCAN Spring Meeting, Linda Longmire, an Associate of the Sisters of St Martha , N.S. and an ARCAN Executive, led us through a session on *Spirituality and Healing* .

Linda is a graduate from the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation from two of their programs: Leading Contemplative Prayer Groups and Retreats, and from the Spiritual Guidance program. She has also written two books, *Deepening a Sense of the Sacred* and *Deepening Your Spirituality*. Linda has learned mindfulness practices from the Shambhala Centre over several years and integrates mindfulness into her Christian spirituality.

Linda began by singing acapella, "Love, you know the suffering I've seen, how do we tend to it's pain?...".

She encouraged us to be mindfully aware of our breath, and of God in our breathing, and its affect on our body, heart, mind, and soul. With every breath, we can breathe God-in (Opening to God) and breathe God-out (Let everything else go). Prayer is our relationship with God, and when we adopt breath prayers as a spiritual practice, our relationship with God may deepen.

She said that the love within each of us has an energy and that it is very important to grow in awareness of this loving energy within us. She shared a prayer card belonging to the late Sr. Thomas Boutilier, Sister of Charity, telling us that when she prays with this card she is aware of the healing energy of Sr. Boutilier's love for God within this card.

Her session included the need to let go of self- judgement as perfectionism is an enemy of the spiritual life, and of the need to cultivate compassion for ourselves with our regrets, fear, resistance and shame... becoming more accepting of ourselves in our humanity ( and others) that we may grow and evolve into Love.. And most importantly to be open and trusting of God's infinite, unobstructed love and compassion for us and through us .

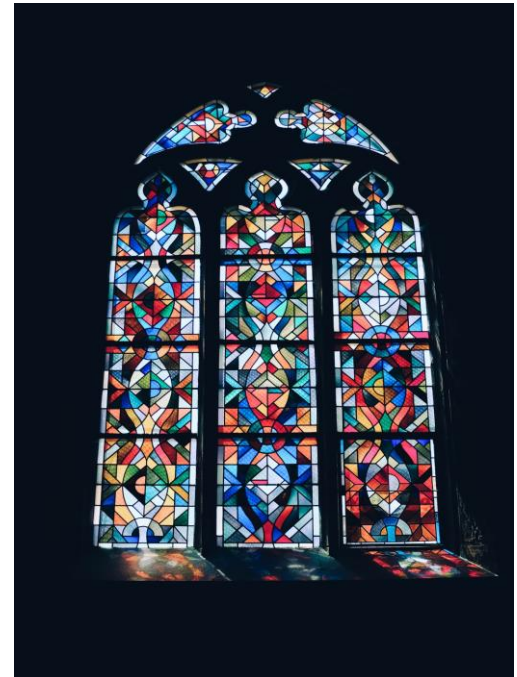
The second half of the session spoke of the **Resistance** we may feel to do the very thing we feel called by God to do. She shared other breath prayers: On the in-breath "I open my resistance to you, my God" and on the Out-breath "Surrendering my Resistance to the heart of LOVE". We must be OPEN and TRUST in God's loving support to become 'portals' of God's love.

She quoted, Julian of Norwich "*We may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own Soul.*" Saying that we could also become aware that 'We may never come to full knowing of God's love for us until we know first clearly own our lovingness'. Breakout rooms allowed the smaller groups to share their experiences. She recommended a few books e.g. the *War of Art* by Stephen Pressfield, the *Power of Grace* by David Richo, and *Sadhana: Eastern Way to God* by Anthony De Mello. She ended each session with the words "May it be so"

Ronnie MacDonald thanked Linda on our behalf for her wisdom and inspiration.



Dianne Macaskill is a CND Associate Coordinator for Visitation Province East, CWL, Dev. and Peace, volunteer at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton, retired federal employee, and mother of one adult son.



## PRAYER GROUPS – A PERSONAL REFLECTION



I am a member of a 7-person Prayer Group, a Small Faith community, which has been gathering weekly for almost 20 years. Meeting in our homes is the ideal, however the extreme isolation of Covid early in 2020 prevented us. Eventually, following masking and distancing protocols, we met in the parish chapel. With a resurgence of Covid in February 2021, we moved to weekly Zoom meetings, where we remain today.

The Prayer Meeting begins with “Breaking Open” the word, a practice of reading and reflecting on the Gospel for the coming week. With the first reading of the Gospel, I listen, reflect, and share

with the Prayer Group that word or phrase in the reading that is meaningful to me; the second reading of the Gospel stirs me to reflect and then share how I hear God speaking to me in my life; the third reading of the Gospel calls me to share what I need to change in my life to best respond to how God is calling me.

I believe the experience of journeying in faith, with a community of close friends, is immeasurable. The act of preparing, reflecting, and sharing surrounding the Gospel story culminates in the weekend Liturgy, where I continually have an eagerness to again hear the Gospel and hear what our pastor brings to his homily. All of this helps to keep the Gospel stories alive in my life, and I, along with my prayer friends, see that Jesus was always connected to His Father, always reaching out to those on the edge of society, never condemning, always compassionate and loving toward the people He encountered. Thus, He challenges me to emulate how He lived out His ministry.

Through the Prayer Group, I along with my friends, openly acknowledge that we have become comfortable taking about our faith. We have come to see ours as a God of Generosity and abundance, who always answers our prayers but in His own way and own time. We often share about discerning the prompting of the Holy Spirit where we are called to reach out and touch another person’s life.

We say ‘thank you’ to God in our moments alone and together for our blessings in life, but we are also able to remind each other that God is always with us, even in the messiness of our lives. We are always able to provide a “safe place to fall” to each other in the most difficult moments that life brings.

Herein, I see that I have slipped sometimes from the “I” to the “we” which speaks to the deep sharing that occurs when we meet. Above all, and of real significance to me is my sense that being a part of the Prayer Group has brought me to a place where God is deeply threaded daily throughout the whole of my life.

Blessings to you all.



Gerri Stapleton is a wife, mother, grandmother; retired social worker; member of the palliative care community within Health Care; Mercy Associate St. John’s NL and member of the Mercy Associate Advisory Council.



## 2023 SYNOD: Questions to Ponder



In preparation for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 2023 the whole Church has been asked to respond to questions about consultation and decision-making in the Catholic Church. Responses from various Archdioceses are being collated and combined with responses across Canada, North America, and the world. Here are a few questions to ponder from a guide for reflection prepared and shared by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in St John's, NL.

### Regarding Listening:

*Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.*

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity of your parish listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? Do we listen to those with different views than our own? Do we hear the voices of minorities, especially those who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion?

### Dialogue in Church and Society:

*Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.*

To what extent do diverse peoples in your community come together for dialogue? Where do you see dialogue taking place in your local church? Can you give some examples? To which issues in the Church and in society do we need to pay more attention?

### Forming Ourselves in Synodality:

*Synodality includes willingness to change, formation, and on-going learning.*

What information is offered in your Archdiocese to empower people to be more capable of “walking together”, listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? Does your Church do this? Give some examples.

Should Sisters or Associates wish to share their opinion and recommendations on these or other Synodal matters, you may forward your message to the attention of Sr. Nathalie Becquart, Under-Secretary for the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, [synodus@synod.va](mailto:synodus@synod.va) or mail to:

General Secretariat for Synod of Bishops

Via della Conciliazione 34

00120 Città del Vaticano



Barbara Hawley is a Mercy Associate Coordinator who lives in St. John's NL. A Mother of two and Grandmother of three, she has worked as a Registered Nurse, and later in Health Care Administration in NL and NS.

## Resources



**The Power of Grace by David Richo** ... The author is an ex-Catholic priest who draws upon Buddhist practices.

**The War of Art by Steven Pressfield**... This is about resistance and talks about the arts but has application to the spiritual life.

**The Gift of Years by Joan Chittister**... This author is a Benedictine Sister who reflects on many issues including temptation and the need to stay involved, importance of well-being and finding beauty in aging well.

**Beyond Surviving by David Maginley**... The author is a four-time cancer survivor interfaith spiritual counselor who discusses cancer, spirituality, and life with the disease.

**Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer**... The author is a mother, scientist, decorated professor and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. It explores the connection between living things and human efforts to cultivate a more sustainable world through the lens of indigenous traditions.

**Crisis leadership by Margaret Benefiel**... The author is Executive Director of the Shalem institute. Drawing on examples from government, business, health care and the church, this book helps leaders in the present crises and beyond.

**Walking Together , A Primer on the New Synodality by Dr. Moira McQueen**... The author is Director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute and professor of Moral Theology at the Toronto School of Theology. The book aims to explain the history, meaning and relevance of synodality for the Church as it takes a two-year process in the developing its structure and the laity's role in doing so.

**Standing on their Shoulders by Sister Charlotte Fitzpatrick , RSM**... The story of the Sisters of Mercy in Newfoundland is about valiant women, women of faith and vision, of courage and commitment, of hope and fidelity. Download the 165 page PDF from [mercyworld.org](http://mercyworld.org)

**Sadhana: Eastern Way to God by Anthony De Mello**... The author was a Jesuit priest and psychotherapist who became widely known for his books on spirituality.

**[The synod: a transformative process](#) | Global Sisters Report.** Nathalie Becquart is a member of the Xavière Sisters, Missionaries of Jesus Christ in France. She is the undersecretary of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops.

**[Catholic Women Preach](#)** is an innovative project designed to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the Church today by responding to Pope Francis' call for broader and more active engagement of the baptized in the preaching mission of the Church. This project, which offers the theologically informed perspectives of catholic women, is a deeply faithful, hopeful and joyful initiative intended to build up the church. ([catholicwomenpreach.org](http://catholicwomenpreach.org)).



**Mary Magdalene (2018)** The story of a miraculous women driven by her faith to follow Jesus. Trailer: [imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com) ( Apple TV)

**The Way (2010)** A father heads overseas to recover the body of his estranged son who died while traveling the El camino de Santiago and decided to take the pilgrimage himself. Trailer:

[imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com) (Prime Video)

**The Two Popes** At a key turning point for the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI forms a surprising friendship with the future Pope Francis. (Netflix)

**The Holy Father's TED Talks** - Our Holy Father Pope Francis teaches us that diversity and inclusion are central to caring for our common home and all its peoples . In April 2017 in a recorded talk Pope Francis shared with us [\*"Why the only future worth building includes everyone"\*](#)

**Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ**, reflected on **Living the Transforming Love of God** in her 2021 Vimeo [video](#). She spoke of the term Charism Carriers and the mission of Associates in various Congregations. She sheds some light on the challenges we could face as we implement our new structure for the future. She shares her knowledge and her vision which is helpful in diminishing our fears. This video was not produced in YouTube however Vimeo is a safe and secure site. We have received permission to share.