

*Celebrating 40 years of Martha Associates 1980 – 2020*

# MARTHA ASSOCIATES *Sycamore* 2020

## *Mutual Sharing Of Our Baptismal Call*

In this Anniversary Edition of the **SYCAMORE**, we look at the Challenges and Blessings that 2020 has brought us; memories of 40 years, and what it means for us to be Martha Associates!

### *The Sycamore*

Did you ever wonder why our newsletter is called the **SYCAMORE**? Ina Boyden in the West was curious about that! She discovered that the name “**SYCAMORE**” has a Biblical connection to the tree that Zacchaeus climbed to catch a better look at Jesus as he was walking by. The tree apparently symbolizes four things: strength; protection; eternity; and divinity. Apparently today, in Jericho, there is a Sycamore tree that is still standing, and is reported to be 2000 years old!!



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# A Reflection from the Martha Associate Director

It is almost the end of June, 2020! I have taken to early morning walks since the virus crisis began. The streets seemed less travelled by in the mornings! On this particular morning, June 25, I had a great sense of joy in my heart. The sky was beautiful, it was warm, but not yet hot, and the Atlantic Bubble for travelling was just announced for July 3<sup>rd</sup>! I was going to be able to visit our Son in New Brunswick! Hooray!!! As I walked, I decided to go along the Sydney Boardwalk, where I was greeted by other morning walkers who acknowledged me with smiles and a cheerful Hello!! ( I think they were filled with joy too! ) And, best of all, I chanced to meet Anne Campbell from the Sydney Associate group who was also walking on the boardwalk!! How wonderful it felt to be able to give her a big hug!!! Yes! The world seemed to be more alive today, like a reopening to life all over again!!



I wonder what that life looks like for each one of us? It has been such a time of challenges, but a time of blessings too! As I flip back in my mind to March, and the shut down of our lives as we knew them! This strange and new way to conduct our lives in the face of a Pandemic. It was unthinkable to believe this could happen to us! But, happen it did!! And yet, our human spirit of resilience has compelled us forward, inviting us to re-invent our lives as we all adapt to living in this present world, this “new normal” of living in the midst of covid-19!

And what of all the other challenges? At least we have the benefit of public health guidelines to help us in dealing with the virus! In these past few months we have seen the best and the worst of times in so many ways! Yes, we have seen and heard of so many acts of kindness and compassion during this pandemic, people caring for people everywhere; all over the world. It is so easy to catch a glimpse at our God at work in these acts of love! And yet, we have also been witnesses to horrible acts of violence, death, tragedy, social and racial injustices that bring us all to tears and nausea!! Where is our God in that?? Sometimes, we ask that very question when humans treat each other so badly, we cannot make any sense of it, and we turn to God and ask: Why? Where were you?

In the book of Joshua we are told:

**“God will never leave us or forsake us....Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord, our God will be with us wherever we go”  
(Jos 1: 5, 9)**

In the Gospels, Jesus reminds us that we are never alone! Our Christian foundation, built on the life of Jesus Christ, supports our belief that God’s spirit is always with us, and God is everywhere and present in all things! Certainly, God was not present in the evil intent and actions of these past months; but God was present in every tear that was shed; every prayer that was prayed; every stand and just action that was taken; every loving act of kindness, mercy and compassion that followed.

God will never leave us or forsake us! God is with us through thick and thin!! And as we continue to move forward, may we do it with an enhanced awareness of the sanctity and dignity of life; all life! Let us begin each new morning with a renewed sense of hope that, by the grace of God, we can each be the person that God has made us to be.

Julia Townsend

**“Our task must be to widen our circle of compassion, to embrace all creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty”**

- Albert Einstein

## ARCAN



ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associate Network) continues its' work to build networks between our various Congregations and Associates.

The ARCAN Steering Committee has a new Executive Committee made up of Anne Bown (Mercy Associate, Nfld) as treasurer; as well as Eileen MacDonald, Associate SC of Halifax; and our own Linda Longmire, Martha Associate! Thank you Ladies for taking on this task on behalf of all ARCAN members!

The ARCAN Steering Committee has made strides to begin an ARCAN Newsletter. A sample newsletter was emailed to all Associate members back in the Spring. Watch for the next issue which should be out in early Fall! We feel this can be a wonderful tool to help us share ideas, upcoming events, prayer and friendship between our Sisters and Associate groups.

ARCAN and the Associates of the Sisters of Charity Halifax, were saddened to lose a very dear member, Cora Shebib. Cora died in February of 2020. Cora was an incredible individual, wonderful family person, dedicated volunteer, friend to many, loving servant of God. She served on the executive of ARCAN for over 10 years as treasurer, and she was deeply committed to the mission of ARCAN. She will always be missed. May she rest in peace.



## NACAR



The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) is a membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote the Associate – Religious relationship.

NACAR has a vision to be a vibrant, viable organization that collaborates with regional partners to promote association in all its forms.

This year, NACAR has presented a series of 'Creative Conversations' which are interactive ZOOM webinars designed for associate leadership to network with one another on topics of interest.

Check out NACAR at [www.nacar.org](http://www.nacar.org)

**“ In this disaster lies an opportunity to reflect and change direction in the hope that if we do, nature will be far more generous than we deserve.”**

- David Suzuki

# News From The United Nations NGO

**Hope springs eternal.** So, let us be people of undaunted hope. This is something we need to hold onto dearly as we reflect on our Direction Statement: *“We desire to bring a contemplative and compassionate heart to our fractured world”*. Little did we realize when we crafted this a year ago, how fractured our world would be today. But it still is a call for each one of us. **This is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations** and Canada signed on at the beginning. With all the difficulties and atrocities and yet good things happening, we still can live Gospel Hospitality to welcome all this into our hearts and hold it all gently with our all loving Creator. The UN is far from perfect, but it is the only global place where all 193 member states come together to view and, for the most part, support our global well-being.

In February 2020, before Covid-19 became a global pandemic, I attended the UN Commission for Social Development. The priority theme was *Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems* to address homelessness. Mary McAlysse, former President of Ireland, stated that the issue is **homelessness** not **houselessness**. This is about people having a home. Try to reflect on the millions of people on our planet who do not have a home: the secure environment in which we grow as persons. Some examples are detention centers, refugee camps, tent cities and some places in Canada. Often it is thought anything out of the cold is good, and in crisis it is, but we need to provide housing where people can be safe, clean, healthy, and environmentally sound to develop healthy relationships and communities. We have sent several *UN and You* alerts to you on this Commission. And, as Pope Francis says so often, we can also apply this to our planet Mother Earth – our home.

We are still in a profit-centered economy rather than a person-centered one. The road ahead will be long and difficult but so was the road we had already travelled, yet we are still here. The crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic stripped away many supports and showed the weaknesses of what we thought were secure systems and institutions.

For the last six months, the UN has been operating mostly virtually. Even the High-Level Panel Forum (HLPF) was held online this summer. In light of this, civil society has rallied to the cause, pointing out what were unjust systems and institutions in our world, especially with regards to the persons most vulnerable in our cultures and society – children, women, seniors, disabled persons, to mention only a few.

On the UN stage, Civil Society is presenting more and receiving a higher profile. Governments, in many cases, make the final decisions but as Kofi Annan used to say

to us as civil society: **“You are the conscience of the world. Governments will not do these things on their own”**.

The UN is much more aware of this, given what the pandemic has exposed, especially in the financial arena. There are more groups of high-level Women Leaders standing firm about the need for a change in structure in the United Nations. We have known this for years, but now their voices are being heard. Some progress is being made, but, to date, the five ‘veto power’ countries of the Security Council have not budged on their place of privilege. As UN Secretary General says: *“Humanity is in a crisis in the way we treat each other as person and countries”*. You may, like many people, be wondering *“What can I do about this?”*. Well, Gandhi lived his wisdom thought **“Be the change you wish to see in the world”**, which now we can take and ponder. Our homes, communities, churches, etc. can all be places of change if each one of us makes decisions from our hearts of Gospel Hospitality.

Thank you for all that you are already doing! Let us all hold the needs of the United Nations and our world in our hearts and prayers. May you celebrate well this 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Martha Associates!

Blessings,

Sr. Marion Sheridan

Martha NGO Liaison



## PRESS RELEASE

June 4, 2020

### A New Beginning for the Bethany Motherhouse Site

**The Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish are thrilled to announce the commencement of a project that will convert the now empty 15-acre site where Bethany Motherhouse once stood into a commemorative garden space designed for contemplative walking for the use of both the Sisters and the larger community. The 2-year phased project begins mid-June. The initial phase includes roadways and infrastructure and is expected to be completed by the end of November 2020.**



*Bethany Motherhouse and the surrounding land before deconstruction*

Bethany Motherhouse overlooked the town and county of Antigonish, Nova Scotia for 97 years. This vibrant center of life and prayer was home for many Sisters, and it was also a welcoming place for many visitors who came as friends, people of faith or needing support and healing. Several years ago, the Congregation made the decision to relocate to Parkland Antigonish as it better met their long-term needs. The Motherhouse building was deconstructed in collaboration with *Colliers Project*

*Leaders* and *Dexter Construction Ltd.* This resulted in diverting almost 94% of the deconstruction debris away from the landfill. The Congregation received the 2019 Divert NS Mobius Award of Environmental Excellence for the Institution of the Year for this achievement.

Soon after, Sisters began envisioning ways of returning the Motherhouse site to a greenspace for community use. They engaged *Viridis Design Studio Ltd.* to create a welcoming garden space for everyone that will capture the historic and spiritual significance of the sacred ground. The Martha story will be highlighted through interpretive panels, landmarks, and salvaged elements from the Motherhouse building. For the landscaping part of the project, Sisters are pleased to continue the partnership with *Dexter Construction Ltd.* and trust the company's vast experience and current commitment to comply with Covid-19 restrictions during the construction period.

Through the dreaming and design phases of the project, the Sisters of St. Martha paired their charism of Gospel Hospitality with their desire to maintain a deep connection with creation. The project is expected to carry the legacy of the 120 year-old Congregation well into the future and serve an important role in the community.

#### **ACCESS TO THE PROPERTY DURING CONSTRUCTION:**

If you visit the property by car during the construction period, please keep in mind that public parking may be very limited as the perimeter fencing will remain in place for the duration of the project. Please respect the road signage.

This is also a gentle reminder that the property is used by many walkers, so maintain very low speed at all times.

We ask all walkers to practice physical distancing.



*One of the design drawings for the garden on the Bethany Motherhouse site*

For more information contact us at [communications@themarthas.com](mailto:communications@themarthas.com)

# Being A Martha Associate Means...

.....Spirituality, Welcoming and a place of comfort and peace.  
(Mary Frances Kandel)

....I have an extended family.  
(Joy MacIntosh)

.....Sharing faith; acceptance of others; trust in God.  
(Julia Townsend)

.....stability; a venue to explore and think with my heart.  
(Julia Dzaich)

..... being a part of a community of encouraging, supportive, faithful believers.  
(Anne Campbell)

.....Being blessed and graced beyond measure.  
(Ina Boyden)

.... A journey with inspiring and courageous people who bring a compassionate heart and Gospel Hospitality to a broken world.  
(Harry and Norma Blinkhorn)

...."Being with the Lethbridge Martha Associates the past ten years has meant hearing and learning many aspects of living the Christian life and enjoying the trust, friendship and companionship of the group"  
(Sr. Theresa Parker CSM)

..... being with special women who give hope and love to all along their path.  
(Lillian Gerrior)

..... belonging.  
( Mary Gillis)

.....Being a Martha associate means : Gratitude.  
(Lorna Burbine)

....being grateful and helpful.  
(Dean and Julie Rook)

..... Being present in the world.  
(Mike Finigan)

....being attached to a wonderful group of women.  
(Marguerite Macneil)

.....Being a Martha associate means: Acceptance.  
(John and Bev Mullins)

...."Walking the walk, not just the talk", as I live out my baptismal call.  
(Terry Campbell)

**"My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form, and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life"**

- Pope Francis

*Associate Moments*









## *A Moment To Remember*

Let us remember our Associates, family members and friends  
who have died and are very much present to us.

We hold them in our hearts and remember how they have been  
a pocket of hope for us through their beliefs, smiles, attitudes and presence.

Gracious God In gratitude for the many years of mutual



40  
Anniversary  
Martha  
1980 -



In hospitality and companionship Let us be challenged and

l sharing of our Baptismal call we rejoice and celebrate



*10th  
Anniversary  
Associates*

- 2020

d blessed as we step into the future with undaunted hope

## New PR and Communications Coordinator for CSM



Beata Gesicka started in her role of the PR and Communications Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Martha in November 2019. She works on a part-time basis primarily to support and assist Congregation Leadership in carrying out their role. More specifically, she helps to organize, edit, and assist with creating content for Congregation newsletters, GA Report, and messages to the public. She also supports Martha Ministry of Spirituality and Martha Justice Ministry with their communication needs. She contributes social media content and is currently redesigning CSM website so it can be utilized more effectively. Beata brings to the Congregation a diverse background as an educator and photographer as well as her passion for using visual images and words in storytelling. Originally from Poland, together with her husband and their two young children they call Antigonish home

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## Some Books For Personal Reading Or For Book Studies:

**REJOICE AND BE GLAD (Gaudete et Exsultate)** – On The Call To holiness in Today's World, Pope Francis  
Uses the Beatitudes and says, "The Beatitudes are like a Christian's Identity card."  
I used it for a retreat for Assumption CWL, Lethbridge, and then many of them read it on their own.

**Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope**, Joan Chittister, OB  
She uses examples from her own life which helps one see that everyone goes through times of pain and sorrow, depression and darkness, stress and suffering. It is in the necessary struggles of life, however, that we stretch our souls and gain new insights enabling us to go on.

**The Holy Longing**, Ronald Rolheiser, OMI  
He defines Spirituality as, "What we do with the fire inside of us is how we channel our eros."  
It's a good book for an intergenerational book study.

**The Universal Christ**, Richard Rohr, Caption under the title: How a forgotten reality can change everything we see, hope for and believe. I am aware of three groups who have gotten together to study this book.

**Finding Calcutta: What Mother Teresa Taught Me About Meaningful Work and Service**, Mary Poplin  
Finding Calcutta is an intriguing journey of faith and insight as Mary Poplin discovers how to integrate her newfound faith into her well entrenched academic world. (found it good for an Intergenerational book study).

**Ten Evenings With God**, Ilia Delio OSF  
A beautiful reflection on spending time with God, and understanding what God's will really means for us.

**Becoming Stillness**: Richard Rohr on YOUTUBE

# *A personal reflection on the challenges and joys of being on the CSM Leadership Team during a Pandemic*



CSM Leadership Council, 2019 - 2024: Sr. Joanne O'Regan; Sr. Brendalee Boisvert; Sr. Donna Brady; and Sr. Florence Kennedy.

My first brush with the seriousness of Covid 19 happened on Monday, March 16th, 2020, the first day Sr. Donna Brady and I went on our Councillor visit to the Sisters of St. Martha Community, Parkland Antigonish. Within a half hour of our arrival, the facility went on lockdown. We were the last two allowed into the building. During my two week visit, I was grateful that I had the opportunity to support the sisters on Enhanced Care and Assisted Living as protocols/restrictions were put in place to protect sisters, residents and staff from Covid 19. The lockdown was quite an adjustment and challenge for the sisters at Parkland Antigonish as well as for sisters living outside of the facility who were no longer able to visit, share meals and celebrate liturgy together.

On Sunday, March 22nd, 2020 when the province of Nova Scotia went under a state of emergency, the CSM Leadership Team guided by recommendations from the CSM Joint Occupational Safety and Health Committee decided that all CSM employees who could work from home would do so. This took quite a bit of planning and coordination to make sure General Administration office staff had what they needed to be able to work from home. CSM Maintenance and Housekeeping staff came into work when it was necessary.

The words from our Direction Statement, "Living Our Life as Mission" certainly took on a new meaning as three of us on the Leadership Team who live at Xavier Community transitioned to work from home. We were now together

day and night. Boundaries between work and home could easily become blurry and sometimes stressful when living and working in close quarters. Because of Premier Stephen McNeil's statement to "stay the blazes home" we ordered our groceries online rather than going to the grocery store. We also relied on TV for liturgy and current news. This included Sunday mass and the Prime Minister's daily update at noon. Personally, having a daily routine of time for prayer, work, walking, playing musical instruments and time together as a community were "lifegiving choices" that helped to balance work and home life.

I found there was ample opportunity to "bring a contemplative and compassionate heart to our fractured world" as we watched on TV the tragic events of the mass shootings in Nova Scotia, the Nato helicopter crash in Greece, the Snowbird helicopter crash in Kamloops, the high percentage of elderly deaths in long term care homes caused by Covid 19, and systemic racism of Black and Indigenous persons to name a few. Besides personal and communal prayer I found myself drawn on my walks around Bethany property to loop around CSM cemetery and ask our deceased sisters (communion of saints) to intercede for all tragedies we were witnessing in our province, Country and world.

Easter Sunday, the CSM Leadership Team visited sisters, residents, and staff outside Parkland Antigonish facility with our singing voices, trumpet, bells, and signs to wish them a Happy Easter and to let them know we missed them. We walked around the perimeter of the building waving and singing to all. We also repeated our Easter greetings to the sisters at Marian Community. This was a new experience of "...deepening communion among ourselves and those we encounter." A couple of weeks later the CSM Leadership Team visited outside St. Martha's Hospital main entrance and the R.K. MacDonald Nursing Home entrance with our singing voices, trumpet, bells and signs to thank staff for keeping patients safe at the hospital and the residents at the R.K. safe from Covid 19. We found a way to "broaden circles of Gospel Hospitality" when both the hospital and nursing home were in lockdown.

A great gift I received during this pandemic was having time to work on an oral history project that has been on my mind and lingering for a few years. My plan was to have it completed during this five-year term on Leadership. I was able to complete a good portion of it while working

## *A personal reflection (continued)*

from home which gave me a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with my progress on this project.

As many have experienced not being able to visit parents and family due to Covid 19, I too was not able to visit my parents. In the past when I would go home on holidays, my parents and I would spend time sharing tunes and playing musical instruments together. Since playing music has been a lifegiving choice connecting me with my parents I chose to play my musical instruments a half hour each day. It was my way of connecting with them when I was unable to visit.

General Administration went back to work on Monday June 8th, 2020. The experience of coming back to work was a new normal of washing hands frequently, wearing masks and physical distancing. I am writing this reflection on the first day of forming the Atlantic Bubble. We are still in the middle of a pandemic in which every human being on this planet is vulnerable to the corona virus. What the virus is

teaching us is that we are all in this together and that we are sisters and brothers who need each other. "In the face of our reality," as we continue to live with Covid 19 we are called to let go of the unnecessary, trust the unknown and "dare to stand in undaunted hope."

Sister Florence Kennedy

July 3rd, 2020



**Sr. Claudette Gallant and Sr. Florence Kennedy**

## *Journeying Through The Pandemic*

Covid19 bounded into our lives bringing many of us to our knees and as I pen these words, continues still to rage on.

Indeed, almost overnight our 'normal' lives, as we knew them, were turned upside down and uncertainty reigned supreme. It was a struggle to make sense of it, to adjust to the numerous challenges now present in our daily lives while attempting to keep fears and anxieties in check.

Living alone brought its positives and also its negative aspects but I knew the only path forward for me would be to hold fast to a very disciplined daily routine. Thanks be to God I was able to accomplish that! Walking twice a day was essential; programs containing pandemic information were kept to a minimum. I never watched the news prior to going to bed and felt sufficiently informed through the daily paper and newscasts. I tried hard (and often failed) to make the whole day one continuous prayer, added good music to my daily diet, sent numerous emails and each evening I'd tally a list of people- family members, friends and neighbors- and drop in on them by phone to see how they were coping in this crisis. That truly was life giving but the highlight of my day was taking in the daily Mass streamed online! Praying with so many other Christians from all around the world brought immense comfort and a quiet peace as did the words uttered frequently at the Masses- "Be not afraid; do not let your hearts be troubled for I am with you always."

Some have said that opportunity and blessings always arise out of a crisis...I will close with the last sentence from the First Reading (Deuteronomy 8.2-3,14-16) Trinity Sunday-

"He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good."

Submitted by a Lethbridge Martha Associate  
Ina Boyden



# Beyond Our Salad Days

Here at our house, up to now, the degree of suffering due to the Covid 19 pandemic had been less than traumatizing, measured in the odd lack of an onion to make gravy, or an itch to go out and buy a bag of chips after 8 pm with no way to scratch it. I might have been driven to watch World Cup soccer finals from 2010 and beyond on YouTube because there's nothing else on. We might have felt a need to kick one another in the behind in moments of over-familiarity, or because somebody found and ate the raspberry jam I'd hidden in the back of the fridge, but that's nothing you would call harrowing. But all the while, for the past three odd months, a single drop of water has been drip, drip... drip... dripping unheard, from a faucet in the wee back caverns of our consciousness, and in early June we began to hear it clearly, and now, just past mid-June, it is all we can hear from dawn until dusk.

In the beginning, we had two teenage boys, high school boys, living with us, one from China and one from South Korea. The Chinese boy, 16 years old, is set for self-isolation even at the best of times. He comes from a city of eight million and so to find a room in a house on a quiet street with a big backyard, a blue sky with breathable air... that's all he wants. He is happy to spend 23 hours a day in the little room we provided for him. He doesn't tire of it. He is as happy as a clam and for all intents and purposes is one. We, on the other hand, meaning Michelle and me, we drive ourselves crazy thinking that he must be desperately sad. What's he doing in there??? School work? The door is closed. He doesn't come out except to eat and do chores. He doesn't go outside. And yet he is cheerful and polite.

We've shrugged this behavior off for a few months, but now...

The guy is so quiet in there. You can't tell if he's awake or asleep, conscious or unconscious, alive or dead. And then he comes out for lunch. Doesn't say much. Compliments the dish and, by extension I guess, the cook. Pats the cat. Then returns to his room. Skips actually. Skips to his room. So.

You can stop at the door. Listen. Put a glass up to it. Get down on your hands and knees and try to see foot movement under the door. Nothing. No sound. No movement.

Did we install a bathroom in there? I forget. We talked about it. But...

Drip... drip... drip...

We asked. "What are you doing?"

"Oh... Reading, watching moooo-vies. Playing video gaaaames.... yes."

"Oh? What movies?"

"Chinese movie. There is no translation."

"Okay. What video game?"

"Not Call of Duty."

"Aha. Yes. But does it have a name?"

"Yes."

Our Korean boy Mr. Sociable, on the other hand, well, he just started pacing within the walls of the house the day the pandemic was declared and gradually picked up speed until he began to bounce. He couldn't sit still. He walked around with earphones in his ears and his phone in his pocket. Talk, talk, talk. Now in English, now in Korean. All day, all night. Walking by us in the kitchen talking, laughing, shouting to somebody down the street or all the way around the other side of the world. Not even seeing us. He did okay, but then it was plain that school was over for the year, in all earnestness, and so was his Canadian Experience. He lasted about three weeks and caught the last plane out of Sydney Korea bound.

So. It doesn't matter. If there are teenagers in the house, or kids, during this, or if you're stuck in the house with somebody who's a challenge, or if you're stuck in the house by yourself, or ..., well, we're a pretty finicky lot. We need solitude and we need company in limited degrees, and this virus and the conditions it imposes puts a strain on the height and breadth and depth our patience can handle. Our temperaments are much like the skin we live in; as Douglas Adams pointed out in his book *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, off all the degrees of temperature in the universe, we can only live comfortably in about 15 of them.

Anyway, Michelle, my wife, she just set up her school office in the Korean kid's room and started working from home.

I was appointed "shopper", the one who goes for groceries. I go on Sunday mornings before nine, to Sobeys. Then around 7:20 pm, when it is quiet again, I go to the Superstore to get what I couldn't get at Sobeys. Then I am finished shopping for the week.

## *Beyond Our Salad Days (continued)*

Odd. Because Michelle has always had the greater social need than me. But she feels no urge to go out. Though she does meet with people online all day in the finely timed app called ZOOM, which, basically, is your video conference call set up. The whole world seems to be meeting on ZOOM or Google Hang-Out these days. Everywhere, all over the land you can hear... "What? Wait! I don't have any audio! Oh. There. Okay, helloooo! Am I here? I'm here twice? I don't have video! Okay. There. There we go. Is that an echo I'm hearing?"

Anyway, at Sobeys on Sunday morning between 8 and 9:30 say, in these circumstances, it is mostly men shopping. We pretend to have been sent. But we like getting out. We aren't social butterflies, but we like being out. Plus, we can put things in the cart with impunity, relying on the philosophy that is better to ask forgiveness than permission. We can stop on the way home for a coffee and a muffin at the drive-thru. Sit in the car and look and listen. Or just sit.

That's all the social life I need. Just getting out on my own occasionally.

Before the pandemic landed, we'd been living a life that was driving me, if not us, to the brink. In other words, your normal 21st Century North American Everyday. We had barely one night a week where we stayed home. The one night we did have though, well, for Michelle it was Monday and for me Tuesday. Other than that it was a meeting here, a meeting there, choir practice, other choir practice, Cape Breton Eagles hockey games, playing music here there and everywhere. Playing at Mass. Planning this, planning that. Volunteering here and there. It all adds up, one thing at a time until you're shaking like a live wire even on your free night.

But then, as though with the throwing of a switch...  
Everything stopped.

We were in Halifax when the switch was thrown, visiting my step-mother who was sick and had been given the Last Rites – yes, Sacrament of the Sick - but Last Rites has a better narrative ring - on Wednesday. On Thursday, when we got there from Sydney River, she bounced back and was eating mashed potatoes and gravy, and peanut butter on crackers, and jujubes. In bed. Watching TV. Drinking Boost. Fit as a fiddle. And there we were. And I was glad; number one that she'd made this astounding recovery, and two because I'd forgotten my dress shoes when I packed my funeral suit.

That night on TV, the world's top doctor I suppose, a man who was given the power to make the call, declared the Coronavirus epidemic officially a pandemic. Covid 19, a virus that had covered the globe.

And what that meant in terms of how it would change anything, I couldn't tell.

But on Friday, by the time we got back to Sydney, I was beginning to understand. First, the NHL shut down. Then Major League Baseball. NBA. Then all professional sports. Then the Cape Breton Eagles hockey team shut right down for the season. Then all of my singing / playing engagements were cancelled. Just like that.

The government declared the March break school break, which had just begun that day, extended for another two weeks. Then three more. Then, okay we're going to try homeschooling for the rest of the year. Then gyms, barbershops, beauty salons, all non-essential business everywhere in town, in the province, in Canada and on the planet... closed. Then restaurants. Dentists. Hospitals. Seniors homes. Click. Click. Click. Locked.

Then church. And we were all watching Mass on Facebook or YouTube or cable TV and still are.

All meeting places. At first groups of 50 would be okay. Then only ten. Then five. Then that's it; stay home, don't visit anybody. No visiting. No driving your car to a nice place to go for a walk. Walk in your own neighbourhood if you must. Get up in the morning, eat your breakfast, play video games or read or watch TV (But what?) until lunchtime. Then another for hour stare until supper, then again until bedtime.

How long would it last? Couldn't last long, surely.

Well. It could. Eighteen months was predicted as a time frame for coming up with a vaccine. At least 18 months. The only way to get rid of Covid 19 otherwise was to stay the blazes home. Starve it.

We were praying, Catholics the world over, in unison, the Rosary, directed by Pope Francis.

On Monday, March 23, driving down the busiest street in town was like driving through a ghost town. On two hands you could count the cars you passed along five kilometres of Kings Road.

Provinces shut down their borders. Then countries followed suit.



## Beyond Our Salad Days (continued)

On the streets of Halifax, Toronto, New York, Madrid, Hong Kong, nobody.

On Easter Sunday, rather than being a rowdy crew of 16 as usual at our table, we were three. Michelle, me, and our international kid from China. Poor guy. Lonesome, we turned on him, over turkey dinner, regaling him with spirited, mysterious stories of Easter past. About grandmothers, grandfathers, neighbours, uncles, aunts living and dead. He looked bored enough to turn to stone. He had no references, no sacramental compass, no experience, but we didn't care. We just kept telling him stories until he cried.

It's June 18th right now. In ordinary time, June is a minefield of year-end potlucks, graduation events, anniversaries, birthday parties and the like. June is usually the busiest month of the year for us. Maybe with the exception of December. But this June... scratch everything but the birthdays. And the anniversary.

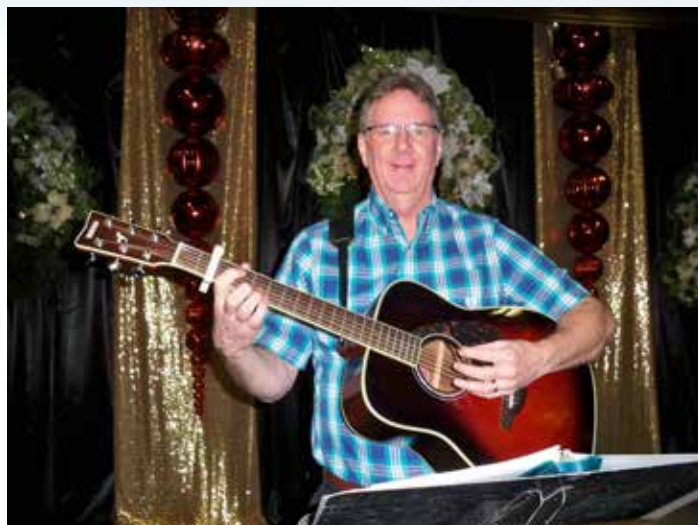
It's nice actually... as long as I don't get a sudden craving for chicken wings or the aforementioned bag of chips.

Things are beginning to lighten up. There's a buckle come loose in the straightjacket of lockdown. Families are bubbling, the streets are filling with cars and people, for the better we hope. Cases of Covid 19 have all but dried up, for now, in Nova Scotia. Every day another restriction is lifted. Parks are open, barbers back to work. We're gathering in groups of ten, and never mind the 6-foot rule. Just wash up. Keep your fingers off your face. Daily, life looks more and more as it was. Until the second wave comes. Which, by all accounts, will happen. Every pandemic worth its salt, ebbs like a tide with inevitable but ever decreasing waves. But for now, people are breathing normally.

I'm one person in one fortunate category of people caught up in this time. My experience of the pandemic has been at worst a mild headache. But at best it has been a chance to reexamine how we live our lives, as actors and / or reactors. I've become the nerd, the introvert I always wanted to be.

I cringe when I think about going back to the life and the pace we lived before this. The running from pillar to post. The sleep lost thinking about having to prepare for this gig or that meeting.

Really, who needs it? We did okay without it.



But they say that some stress is a good thing. It prepares you for more assured stress.

Like showing up at three different potlucks in three different nights.

But... do we really need all those egg salad sandwiches?

Mike Finigan

**“In a world of noise, confusion and conflict, it is necessary that there be places of silence, inner discipline and peace. In such places, love can bloom”.**

- Thomas Merton

# Martha Associate Retreats



**SEPTEMBER 15, 2019 and SEPTEMBER 20 – 21, 2019**  
**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: "TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD"**

Our Martha Associate Retreats, held in September, 2019 were educational, enlightening and inspiring! The theme for our day: "*Catholic Social Teaching: Together We Can Change the World*", was lead by Sr. Joanne O'Regan CSM, a topic which Sr. Joanne was extremely passionate about, and which was clear to us as she guided us through the day!

Sr. Joanne began by telling us that Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is the best kept secret in the Church! CST is dynamic, it keeps moving us forward in life. CST provides us with a lens from which to see the world; from which to see our own lives, from which to experience our faith. It can help us to change the world!! "CST is a journey from our head to our hearts"(Leonardo Buff). We must have confidence in ourselves and in our beliefs. The principles of CST must touch us both individually and communally!

Sr. Joanne opened her presentations with a skillfully summarized journey of the evolution of Catholic Social Teaching, beginning with the first Papal Encyclical from 1891, *Rerum Novarum*, and ending with the hope of Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Sr. Joanne introduced us to the selection of Encyclicals by outlining the highlights of each document, the context in which it was written, and what was the situation of the world at that time in history. This allowed us to see each Encyclical from a new and different perspective when viewed from those vantage points! It was interesting to begin understanding how the Popes of history built on the Encyclicals of their predecessors, always moving the information forward, and adding to the Encyclicals based on the needs of the times.

Sr. Joanne also explained in the words of St. Augustine that there are two books of revelation for us in the world:

## 1. Sacred Scripture

## 2. Works of Creation

In the second part of the Retreat, Sr. Joanne spoke on *Laudato Si*. First she walked us through each Chapter of the Encyclical and finally she brought the whole Retreat together with: "**Hope and Laudato Si**".

We finished our day in gratitude and with a wonderful sharing of the song: "**Together We Can Change the World**".

Sr. Joanne presented the Martha Associates with much to reflect and pray upon, so that, individually and together, we know who we are and what we believe. We can be confident in our roots, especially in our CST. We can be the change that we want to make in our world, and do our part to make the world a better place for all of us to be!! God bless!

Julia Townsend



**Sr. Joanne O'Regan with Mike Finigan and Mary MacKinnon**



**Western Retreat**

**Eastern Retreat**



*Thank You Sister Dorothy Moore!*



The time has come for Sr. Dorothy to retire to Martha Place! We at the Sydney Associate group have been very blessed to have Sr. Dorothy journey along with us these past several years! We are so happy that you will have some time to rest and relax Sr. Dorothy! Thank you for all your support, guidance, love and inspiration, and best of all, your humor!! You will be deeply missed by the Sydney Group! God bless as you continue to discover the wonders God has in store for you!!

**“God is color blind.....we need to be color blind too”**

## *Associate Prayer*

Gracious God, as members of the Martha Associates we believe that Your call is written in the signs of the times. In gratitude for the many years of mutual sharing of our Baptismal call, we rejoice and celebrate.

May we continue through the radical call of the Gospel to be inspired by the Martha Charism, and the Mission, Vision, and Value Statements.

In hospitality and companionship with each other, let us be challenged and blessed as we step into the future with undaunted hope. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Martha Associates

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**The Martha Website is: <http://associates.themarthas.com>**

Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community please email material to Julia Townsend at [julia.townsend@themarthas.com](mailto:julia.townsend@themarthas.com)

Submitted items may appear on the website or in our newsletter.