

Sr. Jovita MacPherson

A MINISTRY THAT TAUGHT *ME* LOTS!

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Ministry in 2020 during the pandemic: first day on Sydney streets

Our ministry and the works that we are involved in, flow from the gift God has given for the sake of the world, we call this gift, Charism. Our Congregation’s Charism is Gospel Hospitality.

I have always been a hospitable person, grew up in a hospitable family. I think it is true to say that hospitality is in my genes!

The many ministries that I have been part of have given me an opportunity to tap into this gift. The one that comes foremost to mind is that of working on the streets in Halifax.

I have learned many things about hospitality from the folks, here are few:

1. They were often more hospitable to me than I was to them and I thank them. Hospitality is a mutual relationship.
2. They taught me that there is no such thing as the poor, the addict, the prostitute, the drunk, the schizophrenic, there are PEOPLE! People who are living in a particular circumstance. One of them told me that it is not fair to identify a PERSON from one dimension of his/her life.

They also taught me about two other influential concepts: toxic charity and the authority of the poor. I have done some of the first and I am fascinated by the latter! Let me tell you about these two.

Charity can become toxic when it disempowers people and prevents them from becoming agents in their own lives. To keep giving in a way that does not grow justice, can keep people dependent and, also soothes the conscience of the giver. Who would think?

Did you ever imagine that people who struggle with poverty have authority? It sounds like an oxymoron. Gospel Hospitality begs to differ! One of the folks told me about an author he read. The author tells us Jesus established the authority of those who suffer as the highest authority for the Church - the Body of Christ, when he said in Matthew 25: “*Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me.*” Jesus himself, puts the whole history of humankind under the authority of the poor. This authority ought not to be disobeyed. Can you imagine the world if we truly listened to this authority?

I am grateful for these learnings and will draw on them as I explore a new street ministry in Sydney, NS.

As Marthas, we hear, embrace, and respond to the cry for Gospel Hospitality in the world. I love this mission!

Could it be yours?

