



Winter 2009

Companions of the Cross



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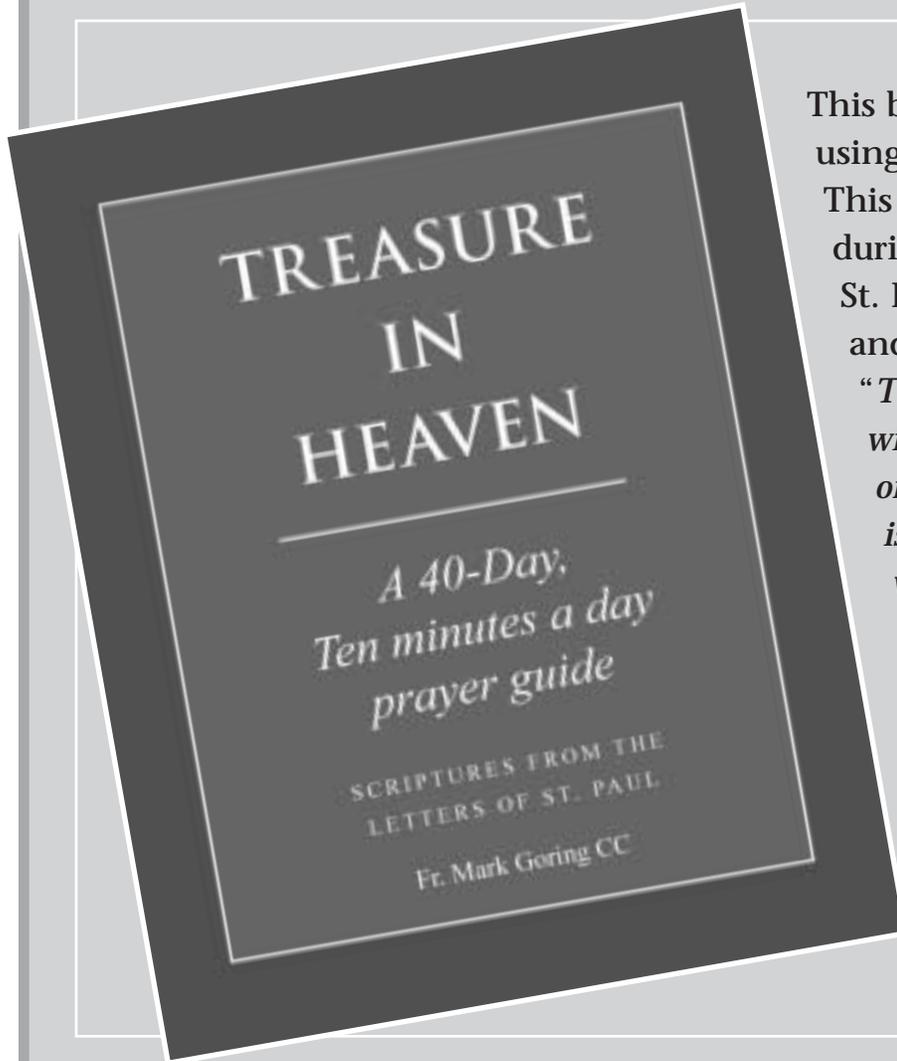
Year of St. Paul

York U
Chaplaincy

Fighting
for Life



PRAYER GUIDE



This booklet is a prayer guide using the words of St. Paul. This is a great opportunity during this year dedicated to St. Paul to study his words and meditate on them daily. *“There is no daily practice that will have as positive an impact on your life as prayer. My hope is that through this booklet you will acquire the discipline of daily prayer and that this discipline will remain with you for the rest of your life.”*

Fr. Mark Goring, CC

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Companions of the Cross



FEATURE

by Fr. Randy Hendriks

From June 2008 to June 2009 the universal Church has been given the “gift” of a jubilee year dedicated to St. Paul. In his document on the opening of the year Pope Benedict states:

“Dear brothers and sisters, as in early times, today too Christ needs apostles ready to sacrifice themselves. He needs witnesses and martyrs like St Paul. Paul, a former violent persecutor of Christians, when he fell to the ground dazzled by the divine light on the road to Damascus, did not hesitate to change sides to the Crucified One and followed him without second thoughts. He lived and worked for Christ, for him he suffered and died. How timely his example is today!

“And for this very reason I am pleased to announce officially that we shall be dedicating a special Jubilee Year to the Apostle Paul from 28 June 2008 to 29 June 2009, on the occasion of the bimillennium of his birth, which historians have placed between the years 7 and 10 A.D. ...Study conventions and special publications on Pauline texts will also be promoted in order to make ever more widely known the immense wealth of the teaching they contain, a true patrimony of humanity redeemed by Christ...in every part of the world, similar initiatives will be implemented in the dioceses, shrines and places of worship, by Religious and by the educational institutions and social-assistance centres which are named after St. Paul or inspired by him and his teaching ...The Apostle to the Gentiles, who was especially committed to taking the Good News to all peoples, left no stones unturned for unity and harmony among all Christians.”

The tradition of a Jubilee year goes back to the time when the Israelites were settling in the land of Canaan. Leviticus chapter 25 recounts the Lord directing



A Saint of Community and Unity

Moses to take a year of rest every seven years. The Lord also directed them to take a time of rejoicing, restoration every 50 years. In that Jubilee year the land would lay fallow, property would be restored, debts released, and prisoners set free. From the time of the Middle Ages Jubilee years have been celebrated in the Church in different increments, most often, every 25 years. All the faithful would be encouraged to make pilgrimages to Rome, or other holy places. Indulgences would be granted to those who followed particular guidelines of prayer and repentance. Most recently, Jubilee years have been celebrated in 1975, 1983 (Holy Year of the Redemption) and most well known to us is probably the Great Jubilee of the year 2000. We could say that in this two thousand year anniversary of St. Paul’s life we are jubilating, or rejoicing in how God has worked in his midst. The Pope has outlined for this holy year many ways to receive spiritual indulgences as St. Paul’s life and mission inspire us.

The Holy Father specifically encourages groups, parishes, organizations and religious communities who are under the patronage of St. Paul. I don’t think it’s a

stretch to call St. Paul a patron and spiritual father to the Companions of the Cross. Two of Paul’s greatest passions were to build unity within the body of Christ and to proclaim Christ to all people. As Companions of the Cross we hold to the call for unity in our brotherhood as a prerequisite to any fruitful work in proclaiming the Gospel. The first pages of our constitutions and rules quote Paul often as he reminds us to live in unity, “St. Paul teaches that while not all members of the Church have the same talents, together they can count on God to provide all the gifts needed for ministry (cf. Rm 12: 4-8, 1Cor 12:4-30). We are convinced that our ministry in the Church is made more fruitful by the fact that we live and work together... We live the common life in order to affirm, support and challenge one another” (*Constitutions*, 8-9). There is no doubt that we are impelled in our fundamental mission by the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: “*We are preaching a crucified Christ ... a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Cor 23-24).

Our *Constitutions* tell us, “The works that we do are varied, but they are always coloured with the proclamation of the kerygma. We evangelize continually”. What a challenging word to live up to. Just as we are to pray without ceasing, we are invited to follow St. Paul’s lead to evangelize without ceasing. It is clear that as Companions of the Cross priests and lay associates and associate members this Jubilee year should be a rallying cry for the efforts of community life and evangelization.

My experiences over the last months seem to be filled with invitations and challenges from the Lord to grow in the area of community. Recently I completed a leadership program called Arrow
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Leadership. Pastoral leaders gathered from all over North America, setting aside four one week sessions over two years to grow in the areas of Christian leadership. I was a little intimidated entering into the program as the only Catholic. While I came with the expectancy of learning new “skills” as a leader, what was more profound was the unity experienced with leaders from a variety of Christian traditions and cultural backgrounds. I was happily surprised when a Baptist Pastor sought resources on how to lead a reconciliation service, and another leader was ready to dive into praying through the liturgy of the hours and doing *lectio divina*. I’ve recently been reading some great books by Evangelical authors, basically challenging me to live some pretty basic principles of service, simplicity and holiness. Just a few months ago I had the privilege of meeting and praying with other Christian pastors in the neighbourhood. While we may have different outlooks on what it means to proclaim the Gospel, it’s wonderful to celebrate what God is doing in the faith communities surrounding us, and how he might be calling us to work together.

In the parish of St. Timothy a new ministry that has been growing in the last six months during the Jubilee year is a group called “Community Care”. Often when people come to the parish with needs and challenges all I can give them is a prayer and a phone number of some social service agency in the city. Community Care has been established to help people in the community to experience ongoing relationships. We have members who can speak Spanish, Chinese and Tagalog and help with the many new immigrants in the neighbourhood. In many ways we’re called to be the “hospitality team” for the nation as many people come to the parish looking for community after being in the country for just a few days. What a wonderful opportunity to build community and evangelize. A few months back we swept through a local apartment building, blessing parishioners’ homes and gathering for a social afterwards. It was great to see fellow parishioners connecting with

one another who may have been strangers for years. Certainly there seemed to be a jubilee grace in our efforts to build community and connection within the body of Christ.

As our founder Fr. Bob reminds us in his writing, in speaking about building community, and serving those in need, “...while all these are imperatives to our mission from the Lord, one ministry stands first, head and shoulders above the rest: evangelization” (*Evangelization: A Challenge for the Catholic Church*). Certainly in the life of St. Paul this could be said as well. In his missionary travels Paul continued to proclaim Christ even in the midst of persecution, beatings, shipwrecks and imprisonment. He proclaimed the word in season and out of season, and was able to adapt his message to become “*all things to all people.*” As Companions of the Cross we are called to renew our efforts even in the midst of a culture that doesn’t always seem ready to hear it.

This past summer I received a letter from the Archbishop of Toronto, Thomas Collins, asking me to consider promoting the “Alpha” program at our parish. Alpha consists of about 12 weekly sessions where participants come together to share a meal, receive a video teaching on the basic message of Christianity, and discuss their experiences in small groups. After entrusting the program to a dedicated group of lay people, it was wonderful to see a large number of parishioners and members of the larger community come together to share their faith and be fed, physically and spiritually. Many are now hungry for the next step, “What are we going to do next, Father?” seems to be the most common question I am hearing. I’d rather that challenge than any other – it’s a sign of people who are passionate about growing in their faith.

In the archdiocese of Toronto a special icon of St. Paul was commissioned and was “written” by a Benedictine sister, Soeur Marie-Paul, from a monastery in the heart of the Mount of Olives (see front cover of newsletter). St. Timothy parish

was blessed to have the icon present in the parish and we had a number of special activities that week including special holy hours, a Healing Mass and teachings. To prepare for the visit Fr. Francis Ching gave a series of teachings on St. Paul’s life and mission (www.sttimothy.parish.ca). An activity that stands out for me was having about 600 of our grade school children from the three parish schools come to pray and learn with the icon. Children from different grades acted out the conversion experience of Saul, his missionary activities, and how we can apply St. Paul’s teaching to our lives today. I spent some time explaining the symbolism of the icon, and we finished with a litany of St. Paul. With the children involved in singing, praying, and learning I believe this was an evangelizing experience. We can’t be afraid to find new ways to evangelize and proclaim Christ to the world.

How will you live in this Jubilee grace? With every diocese celebrating the Jubilee year of St. Paul in different ways I encourage you to find out what is going on around you. There are many resources available to help in your study of St. Paul and his teaching. The official site on the Internet for the Holy Year is www.annopaolino.org. You can also go to the Vatican’s website to read the Holy Father’s address in announcing the year of St. Paul (www.vatican.va). I encourage you to read through St. Paul’s letters. Pray for the grace of God, the spirit of the Jubilee year. It’s often easier to ask for the intercession of a popular saint like St. Anthony, or St. Jude for their intercession, but I encourage you in this Jubilee year of St. Paul, to strengthen you to committing yourself to a life of unity and community and to redouble your efforts in proclaiming the good news as St. Paul did, even in the midst of challenges and road blocks! Let’s live this Jubilee year with expectancy that God will and is doing a mighty work in the midst of his people. ☩

Fr. Randy Hendriks is the pastor of St. Timothy parish in Toronto, Ontario.



FEATURE

by Fr. Galen Bank

40 Days for Life - Ottawa



A new pro-life campaign called “40 Days for Life”, took place in Ottawa from September 23rd to November 2nd, 2008. During this campaign, the faithful of Ottawa joined together to pray, fast and hold vigil outside of the Morgentaler abortuary, in downtown Ottawa, for 40 days and 40 nights.

When I was approached by Nicole Campbell, of Campaign Life Coalition, to promote 40 Days for Life at St. Maurice Parish, it did not take a great deal of time to see the enormous potential of such an initiative. I saw it as an opportunity to encourage the faithful to participate in peaceful and prayerful activism in the pro-life movement. It also provided occasion to expose the truth and stark reality of abortion and to plead for God’s mercy and healing for the damage abortion has inflicted upon so many.

Personally, 40 Days for Life was an important realization that as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we have responsibility to love and care for all members of the Body – saint and sinner alike. Jesus, as the head of this body, has a deep love and commitment to its members, which is revealed in the scriptures. In John 17, Jesus expresses the burden on his heart for humanity as he prays to his Father. Allow me to quote a few passages:

“When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled” (Jn 17:12).

“I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one” (v.15).

“Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth” (v. 17-19).

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one so that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (v. 22-24).

In these passages, it is Jesus’ desire that we be consecrated in truth, protected and guarded from the evil one, that no one be lost and that we be one with him now and in eternity. As disciples of Christ, we must embrace the same heart and desire of Jesus, that our brothers and sisters be

consecrated in truth, protected and guarded from the evil one, that not one be lost and that all become ONE with him now and in eternity. By virtue of our Baptism, Jesus sends us into the world to carry on the same mission for which he came. We are entrusted with the responsibility and obligation to deeply love and care for one another desiring that not one soul be lost. The 40 Days for Life campaign was an opportunity for us to love and nurture the body of Christ and make some sacrifices for our brothers and sisters involved in the abortion industry – for mothers and fathers who have had abortions and are pondering abortion - and to pray for an end to the tragedy of abortion in our country.

In John 17:15, Jesus prays for our protection from the “evil one” because he knows Satan relentlessly leads us away from God who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. If we doubt the power of Satan, then we might ask ourselves why so many men, women and teenagers are convinced that abortion is an acceptable practice? Why do many believe that the child in the womb of a mother is not a child when science indicates otherwise and that we have the right and authority to exterminate that life? The “father of lies” is hard at work and responsible for the veil of deceit and
Continued on page 4

lies that prevents so many from grasping the truth of abortion. With conviction, we can say that the prayer, fasting and sacrifice offered in the 40 Days for Life were a powerful means of combating the darkness and deceit of the evil one.

The battle for life can become exhausting and seemingly fruitless, leading us to disengage, to not take it seriously or to simply roll over and say “nothing can happen anyway”. However, God is waiting for us to arise from our apathy and engage in the battle with him to end the innocent killing of babies. Without question, abortion is a great concern upon the heart of God. How painful it must be for him to see approximately 120,000 abortions per day worldwide. How painful it is for God to see how we treat the most vulnerable and to see our apathy towards abortion. Nevertheless, our intercession and sacrifice releases power from on high and consoles the heart of God. I thank Nicole Campbell for organizing and motivating the faithful of Ottawa to engage in the battle for life.

Here are some reflections on the 40 Days for Life by Nicole Campbell the organizer from Campaign Life Coalition.

“The 40 Days for Life Campaign was a life-changing experience for many of us. Hearts were changed and people came to know Christ in a very powerful way.

There were many people who would consider themselves ‘pro life’ but admittedly stated that they had never done anything ‘active’ like this before. Many people shared that they had intended to come out for an hour with their Church but after being out at the abortion facility they knew they had to keep coming and so they did. There was one participant, who was 79 years of age, who took the late night shift every night of the Campaign for two hours – 39 nights in a row! Now, THAT is dedication!

“Ottawa will never be the same! The enemy’s grip has been greatly weakened and I believe with all of my heart that this abortion facility will close sooner rather than later. The Lord will hear our prayers and in his perfect time, we will see great fruit! During the 40 Days for Life Campaign we know of at least three children who were spared from abortion. This of course has major repercussions, as family trees have been potentially spared as well. Abortion workers have quit their jobs during the 40 Days for Life and we believe that many more women cancelled their appointments or just walked by the clinic doors because of our prayerful presence. We will find out in heaven one day.

“There was a profound peacefulness and spirit of reverence at the vigil site and passers-by could not help but be silent and respectful as they walked by all of us

with our signs and rosaries. A community was formed on the streets of Ottawa during the 40 Days for Life which was so beautiful. Who knew such a place would become a place of refuge drawing hundreds of people to come out and pray. We could not have been as successful as we were if it were not for the Companions of the Cross’ support and visible efforts! Vigil candles were lit, holy hours were arranged and CC priests spoke with boldness about the life issues from the pulpit. This is crucial in ending abortion and these brave priests were unafraid to give a voice to the voiceless as Jesus will ask us what we truly did for his little ones. What answer will we have for him? We are called to be his hands and his feet and if we shy away from such issues, we will be held responsible.”

We must remember those who have had, participated or supported abortions in our prayers. We are called to love and show compassion to those who have been through this painful and tragic experience. If you are suffering from an abortion, please contact “Rachel’s Vineyard” in Ottawa, 613-806-5522 and in Toronto you can contact “Second Chance Ministry” at (416) 261-7135, 905-430-7990, or e-mail asteenstra@sympatico.ca.

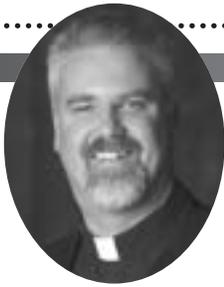
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Fr. Galen Bank is the Pastor of St. Maurice parish in Ottawa.



Companions of the Cross Your Internship Opportunity

Interested in serving the Church , sharing the good news,
and growing in leadership?

St. Timothy parish in Toronto is offering a year long youth internship program with opportunities for growth through mentoring, evangelistic outreach and faith formation. You will work alongside Companions of the Cross priests on the front lines of parish ministry in the heart of Toronto. For more info email interncc@gmail.com.



FEATURE

by Fr. Scott McCaig, CC – Moderator of the Companions of the Cross
From a homily given on July 13, 2008 – www.companioncross.org

Reason, Faith and the Abortion Debate

The decision to award the Order of Canada to the abortionist Dr. Henry Morgentaler has led to much public debate. Some of it has been encouraging. Several Members of the Order of Canada have even returned their medals in protest. But there has also been much that has been discouraging. Particularly disconcerting have been the opinion pieces that begin: “I’m a Catholic, BUT...” and then proceed to give reasons why the authors feel it is justified to support abortion and why we should be honouring those who perform them.

Yet in all these arguments there is a conspicuous absence, one thing that nobody acknowledges, which even abortion advocates no longer try to deny: **in every direct abortion an innocent living human being is put to death.**

From the moment of conception there exists a separate human being with a distinct genetic code. Her sex, eye colour, blood type, fingerprints, and innumerable other personal characteristics **are all her own**, and different from her mother’s. A unique human being, unlike any that has ever been or ever will be has come into existence. All that remains is for her to grow. You and I were the same once, a living human being in our mother’s womb.

At 18-25 days old, her little heart is already beating. By four weeks, her blood circulation is well established, her arms and legs, little lungs and ears are forming, all before the mother is likely even aware she is pregnant. At 42 days, she has measurable brain waves, all her organs are in place and she is moving and kicking, though she is too small for her mother to notice. At week nine, she weighs about



seven grams. The iris of her eyes and her fingernails appear. She can squint, swallow, move her tongue, and would make a fist if you stroked her palm.

By ten or eleven weeks, all her body systems are functioning. By week 12, she is sucking her thumb vigorously and practicing breathing in her mother’s amniotic fluid. And all of this occurs in the first trimester of her mother’s pregnancy. Her growth continues even after she is born at around nine months. In fact, she will be only slightly less dependent on others after her passing through the birth canal than before. She will continue to develop right into her late teens.

It is important to note that none of these facts are disputed on either side of the abortion debate. These are **scientific** facts. They can easily be found with an internet search on fetal development (for example at www.abortionfacts.com) with wonderful pictures of a living, growing human being at every stage.

We are not dealing with some nondescript cells lining the uterus or a mere “blob of tissue”. This is not the mother’s body tissue. Even in the earliest stages of embryonic development these cells contain different DNA than the mother’s. This is a distinct, individual human being. To see

this, consider the following question: Does a pregnant woman have four eyes, two brains, or two hearts? Of course not, because it’s not **her** brain or **her** heart, it’s someone else’s! They are the fruit of her womb, **but they are not her.**

If you are unconvinced, try asking Gianna Jessen, Amy Charleton, Heidi Huffman, or many others who have survived after attempted abortions. Talk to Ana Rosa Rodriguez whose arm was ripped off in the process of an abortion. Listen to the words of Sarah Smith who survived an abortion, but her twin brother wasn’t so fortunate: “Andrew was aborted and we lost him forever.” (www.prolife.com/SARAH2.html).

The one undisputed fact, the most important fact, the one fact that is most carefully avoided is that **in every direct abortion a unique, innocent, living human being is put to death by someone else.** Those who promote abortion are claiming that one person has the right to take the life of another innocent human being.

Whether they adopt the arguments of 19th century slave owners, who believed that one person could be the **possession** of another and so have life and death rights over them;

or the arguments of racists who believe that some humans are **more human** than others and, therefore, should have the right to put their inferiors to death;

or the arguments of those who opposed the right of women to vote, because, although they were human,

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they were **not deemed equal**, so only others were competent to decide their fate;

or the arguments of dictators and oppressors throughout the ages who believed that the value of a life is measured by the **degree of service or convenience** it offers to the privileged few;

or the arguments of eugenicists who believe that humanity should be improved by selectively killing those they deem to be **imperfect**.

They can spin it any way they want. Whatever justifications are used, it all comes down to this in the end: **that it is somehow justified to intentionally put an innocent and defenseless human being to death.**

One does not have to be Catholic, or even a believer in God, to see that the above arguments are always and everywhere wrong.

First, no human being can be the possession of another. They can be dependent on another, under the care of another, responsible to another, but **not** their possession. Human beings are not objects to be owned and discarded at will. If you believe they are, then what is to stop someone from overpowering **you** and claiming you as their possession, or discarding you, or your family, at their whim? A child is under a mother and father's care, but she is **never** their possession.

Second, some human beings are **not** more human than others. Human dignity is universal and inviolable. It is not conferred on us by our parents or anyone else; it is inherent to our nature. If not, then who decides who is superior or inferior? What would stop someone from claiming superiority over **you** because of your skin colour, IQ, or economic situation? An unborn child is a human being with as much humanity as you or I have. Passing

through the birth canal does not make a child more or less human.

Third, since every human being has equal dignity, each unborn child has the **same right** to live, grow up, laugh and play, and decide her own direction in life. If she doesn't have that right, why should you or I? To deny the fundamental rights of one person is to endanger the rights of all.

*Blessed Mother Teresa
put it this way:
“Any country that
accepts abortion is not
teaching its people to
love, but to use any
violence to get what
they want. That is why
the greatest destroyer
of love and peace is
abortion” (National
Prayer Breakfast
Speech, 1994).*

Fourth, the value of human life **cannot** be measured by the service or convenience they provide to the privileged few. It is an injustice to make one class of people a lower “caste” to serve another.

Fifth, despite what modern eugenicists might say, our dignity is **not** measured by some arbitrary standard of perfection. Otherwise, some of the greatest heroes of human history would never have been allowed to live. It is indeed our task to improve humanity, **but through love**: by showing compassion to those in need and helping them to overcome disabilities, not by killing them.

Justifying abortion on the basis of lowering crime or poverty rates is ludicrous. If it is argued that some potential criminals have been destroyed, then it must also be granted that along with them have perished those who would have been scientists, poets, philosophers, doctors, humanitarians, and even recipients of the Order of Canada. In fact, any society that says it's acceptable to intentionally kill innocent human beings is far more likely to produce a sick culture and depraved morals. Blessed Mother Teresa put it this way: “Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. That is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion” (*National Prayer Breakfast Speech*, 1994). Or as Archbishop Collins of Toronto wrote: “A community's worth is measured by the way it treats the most vulnerable, and no one is more vulnerable than in the first nine months of life's journey.” (www.archtoronto.org/pdf/morgentalerjuly1088.pdf)

The moment you say that it's justifiable to put an innocent human being to death, for whatever reason, you cannot have a humane and just society. Human dignity is either inviolable or it isn't.

Blessed Mother Teresa summarized it well: “The so-called right to abortion has pitted mothers against their children and women against men. It has sown violence and discord at the heart of the most intimate human relationships. It has aggravated the derogation of the father's role in an increasingly fatherless society. It has portrayed the greatest of gifts – a child – as a competitor, an intrusion, and an inconvenience. It has nominally accorded mothers unfettered dominion over the independent lives of their physically dependent sons and daughters. And, in granting this unconscionable power, it has exposed many women to unjust and selfish demands from their husbands or other sexual partners. Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by

virtue of his humanity. The right to life does not depend, and must not be declared to be contingent on the pleasure of anyone else, not even a parent or a sovereign.” (“Notable and Quotable,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 1994, p. A14)

Many who advocate for abortion call themselves “pro-choice”. I believe strongly in the freedom to choose. My own great-grandmother was a well-known suffragette who fought for women’s rights in England. Free will is a precious gift from God.

But free choice has limits: Your freedom to swing your fist ends at the tip of my nose. I don’t have the right to choose to drink and drive because I would endanger other people’s lives. I don’t have the right to choose to stop feeding my elderly parents, no matter how inconvenient or dependent they are on me, because that would be abuse. I don’t even have the right to choose to drive without properly securing a child in an approved car seat, because I would be risking his or her life. It’s the law. We have such laws to protect the fundamental rights of everyone.

So why is it legal in Canada to choose to have a child dismembered alive in her mother’s womb? Or even kill her just before the act of birth? Behind all the rhetoric, that’s the “choice” in “pro-choice”. And what does it say about a society that honours those who do it? If you tried to do to a house pet what is legal to do to unborn children in this country you could be arrested (and rightly so). In fact, the womb has become the most dangerous place in Canada to be.

Now everything I’ve said so far is human logic. It is something any properly informed rational person can understand. We call it the natural law. People of every faith, and no faith at all, can and do recognize the truth that direct abortion is the taking of an innocent human life and that no argument, circumstance, or need can ever justify it. The end never justifies the means. Doing evil that some foreseen

good might come of it is always self-defeating. It never works. It is like sawing the branch on which we are all sitting.

As Catholic Christians we recognize even deeper reasons why abortion is wrong. We know that God is the author of all life. We are not merely the products of a biological process. Before, beyond, and through the wonders of biological devel-

The end never justifies the means. Doing evil that some foreseen good might come of it is always self-defeating. It never works. It is like sawing the branch on which we are all sitting.

opment, we were loved into being by God who chose each one of us and calls us by name. The prophet Isaiah says: “Listen to me and pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb; from the body of my mother He named me” (Is 49:1). Through the psalmist God says to each one of us: “You are fearfully and wonderfully made, I knit you together in your mother’s womb” (Ps 139). To the prophet Jeremiah He says, “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb” (Jr 1:5).

God has chosen every life and has a plan for every life and it is not our place to destroy it. We should avoid taking the life even of the **guilty**, let alone the innocent. J.R.R. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, made this point beautifully in *The Lord of the Rings*. Gandalf tells Frodo, who is tempted to destroy his adversary Gollum, “Many that live deserve death, and some

die that deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then be not too eager to deal out death in the name of justice, fearing for your own safety. Even the wise cannot see all ends.” (*The Two Towers*)

God writes straight with our crooked lines. No matter how difficult the circumstances of a child’s conception, they are wanted, welcomed, and chosen by God. They were created by him and for him, to love and be loved, in this life and for all eternity. As Pope Benedict reminded us in *Deus Caritas Est*, at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian is that “we have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16). God loves each and every one of us with an everlasting love. To see the worth of every unborn child in God’s eyes, look carefully at a crucifix. The life of his own Son is the value God sets on every child he has created.

There can be no “I’m a Catholic, BUT...” “Pro-abortion Catholic” is as much a contradiction in terms as “Pro-life abortionist”. Jesus has revealed to us that on the Day of Judgment, he will ask us what we have done to help and protect those in most danger and need. “Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). He will ask us whether we have been merciful as he has been merciful to us, or if we have excused ourselves because virtue was just too difficult or inconvenient.

So what is God asking of us? Let me suggest a few things that all of us can do:

1. **Speak up.** Take the time to contact your political representatives. Sign the various pro-life petitions that circulate each year. Learn the facts about abortion and defend the cause of life in the places where you live and work.
2. **Teach** your children and grandchildren the truth: Life is sacred from conception to natural death.

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Continued from page 7

3. **Open your heart** to those in need, especially pregnant women who are in dire circumstances. If you can't help directly, then help those who do. Pro-life ministries are always in need. Be merciful and compassionate to those who have been victimized by abortion. Those who advocate for abortion and those who profit from it often deceive women into thinking that abortion will erase all their mistakes and problems. They don't tell them about the pain, potential infertility, remorse, and even trauma. As Christians we need to welcome those victimized by abortion with the same love and mercy that we have received from the Lord.

4. **Pray!** We can pray for the healing of the women who have had abortions and for those who promote the culture of death. Pray for their conversion. With God anything is possible.

You might be surprised to discover that Norma McCorvey (the "Jane Roe" of *Roe vs. Wade* which legalized abortion in the United States of America) was baptized and received into the Catholic Church in 1998. Now she is fighting the good fight for pro-life. The Lord won her back and now she is helping win others.

Dr. Bernard Nathanson was personally responsible for 75,000 abortions and was one of the chief architects of the modern abortion industry. He entered the Catholic Church in 1996, and became an impassioned pro-life campaigner. He was a more influential advocate for the culture of death than Dr. Morgentaler ever was. If God can reach Dr. Nathanson, he can get to anyone! He is only one of many former abortionists now fighting for the pro-life cause. We have no idea how powerful our prayers are. We need hearts to be converted and only God can do that. I would especially recommend mentioning this

intention when you pray the rosary. Our Lady is the **Patroness of the Unborn** and will not let our pleas go unanswered.

Because so many have been deceived and victimized by the false and empty promises of the culture of death, I would like to close with the compassionate words of our late Pope John Paul II:

"I would like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly.

"If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitely lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord.

"With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 99).[Ⓢ]



FEATURE

by Fr. Charles Orchard

Keeping Vigil in the Philippines

Mabuhay! (Long life to you! in the Tagalog language.) The Companions of the Cross began their new foundation in the Philippines on September 7, 2008 when Fr. Fernando Suarez, Fr. Jeff Shannon and myself were sent forth from our community's birthplace in Ottawa to live our charism and minister in the Philippines near the proposed Shrine of Mary Mother of the Poor at Montemaria. We are presently living in Batangas City, about a 40 minute drive to Montemaria as we await the construction of our residence at the Shrine site. We are now blessed to have with us a seminarian David Bergeron. David arrived on November 13 and will be with us as seminarian intern until May 21, 2009.

The first months here have been very rich as we have experienced the great hospitality of the Philippino people and a whole new culture. We continue to sense the hand of God on this new foundation as we settle in to our life and ministry here. Fr. Fernando and Fr. Jeff continue sharing the gift of healing in the Philippines and beyond. The Lord Jesus continues to bless his people with wonderful physical, and spiritual healings through their healing and preaching ministry. This has also been an intense time working alongside the Mary Mother of the Poor charitable organization. Among the many works of this great ministry, we

have been involved in the final planning for the shrine building project, meeting with the leaders of the Mary Mother of the Poor feeding programs, livelihood programs and educational programs. David and I have been busy in ministry at the three local parishes in Batangas City, in meeting with clergy of the Archdiocese of Lipa and in ministering weekly with Fr. Javey Javines, SDB at the Saturday evening Masses at Montemaria. The Montemaria Shrine is now nearing the stage when actual construction can begin. Construction of "St. Joseph House", our residence at Montemaria, will begin soon. We look forward to moving to that beautiful and prayerful place.



One of the remarkable aspects of the Philippines is its strong Catholicism. This is a place where faith and daily life truly go hand-in-hand. It is a great joy to live among a people of such great faith and devotion. As Companions of the Cross we feel at home spiritually as we live and minister from our community's Eucharistic, Charismatic, Magisterial, and Marian pillars.

We see the devotion of the Philippino people firsthand in the monthly prayer vigils and healing Masses that we have begun at Montemaria. Our last vigil on November 14-15 began with a Saturday afternoon celebration of the Eucharist, followed by an hour long Eucharistic procession up to the top of the Montemaria hill. We spent a time of adoration on top of Montemaria, enjoying not only the Lord's presence but also a beautiful sunset as we looked out from this 500 foot elevation over the ocean rimmed by mountainous islands. After the procession the Eucharistic adoration vigil continued for 15 hours up until 8 am Sunday morning. It was truly inspiring to see so many people praying from sunset to sunrise under our "big tent" in the open air in God's beautiful creation.

The vigil was a special time of prayer for the construction of the Oratory of Mary Mother of the Poor at Montemaria. At a

previous vigil we were interceding for the finding of water on the property and shortly after this vigil the well boring company finally found water 560 feet below the surface! We found not only a drinkable water supply but also a hot spring! We are building a foundation of prayer at Montemaria and seeing the fruits of that prayer well before the physical foundations of the statue, chapels and shrine church are put in place!

In the early morning of the vigil we had a Marian procession accompanied by the recitation of the rosary while we again journeyed to the top of Montemaria. Upon the return of the procession we entered into a time of praise and worship led by the the local Couples for Christ prayer ministry and yours truly! The climax of the vigil was the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist presided over by Fr. Fernando Suarez with Fr. Jeff Shannon, Fr. Javey Javines, SDB and myself concelebrating in the midst of a crowd of 3,000. The Mass was on a beautiful sunny morning, under a big tent! The joyous and prayerful Mass was blessed with the presence of many young people who live in the area and are beneficiaries of our MMP educational and feeding programs. A number of the teenagers presented a drama before the Mass began to assist us in preparing for the celebration of Sunday Eucharist.

It is always very edifying to see and hear Fr. Fernando preaching and celebrating the Eucharist in his native tongue among his people. He always takes the time to lay hands on every person who comes for healing prayer. When you are at the front of the gathering it is very touching to see the people coming forward to humbly ask for prayer, the Lord moving in their lives and then to hear the testimonies of those who have been healed during the Mass and healing prayer.

Maraming Salamat Po! (Our deepest thanks) to you for all your prayer and support as we begin this new foundation. We see the effects of your prayer daily, are blessed by your emails and letters, and are so grateful for the privilege to have been called by the Lord to assist in his work in the Philippines. You can read more about our life and ministry at the following websites: http://web.me.com/chasnlife/Companions_of_the_Cross,_Philippines/, <http://www.marymotherofthepoor.org/>, <http://www.montemariashrine.com>, <http://www.fatherfernando.com>. ☺

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Fr. Charles Orchard was ordained to the priesthood in 1995 and is originally from Cobourg, Ontario.



Companions of the Cross

P r i e s t s 2 0 0 8 - 2 0 0 9



Fr. Rob Arsenaux
(Temporary Commitment)
Kingston, ON Ord. 1994



Fr. Galen Bank
Glenavon, SK Ord. 2001



Fr. Bob Bedard
Ottawa, ON Ord. 1955



Fr. John Paul Bolger
Cambridge, ON Ord. 2008



Fr. Daren Bryk
Edmonton, AB Ord. 2000



Fr. Francis Ching
Toronto, ON Ord. 2005



Fr. Brian Christie
Sarnia, ON Ord. 2005



Fr. Tim Devine
Kitchener, ON Ord. 2002



Fr. Terry Donahue
Oakland, NJ Ord. 2000



Fr. Francis Donnelly
Montreal, QC Ord. 1979



Fr. John Fletcher
Buffalo, NY Ord. 2001



Fr. Francis Frankovich
Riverside, CA Ord. 1968



Fr. Jerry Gauvreau
Lindsay, ON Ord. 2001



Fr. Mark Goring
Pembroke, ON Ord. 2002



Fr. Dennis Hayes
Guelph, ON Ord. 1986



Fr. Randy Hendriks
Vineland, ON Ord. 2002



Fr. Pierre Ingram
Guelph, ON Ord. 1995



Fr. Rick Jaworski
Winnipeg, MB Ord. 1990



Fr. John Likozar
Toronto, ON Ord. 2000



Fr. Allan MacDonald
St. Raphael's, ON Ord. 1994



Fr. Yves Marchildon
Victoire, SK Ord. 1996



Fr. Scott McCaig
Kamloops, BC Ord. 1995



Fr. Jim McGillivray
Kingston, ON Ord. 1969



Fr. Bernard Messier
Stoney Point, ON Ord. 2008



Fr. Michael Minifie
South Mountain, ON Ord. 2005



Fr. Charles Orchard
Cobourg, ON Ord. 1995



Fr. Christian Riesbeck
Ottawa, ON Ord. 1996



Fr. Mike Scherrey
Fort Smith, AR Ord. 2005



Fr. Jeff Shannon
Sudbury, ON Ord. 1997



Fr. Ben St. Croix
Kenora, ON Ord. 2001



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Priests 2008 - 2009



Fr. Fernando Suarez
Batangas, Phillipines Ord. 2002



Fr. Marc Syrenne
Saskatoon, SK Ord. 1997



Fr. John Vandenakker
Ottawa, ON Ord. 1985



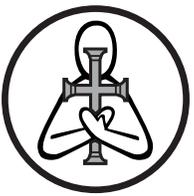
Fr. Roger Vandenakker
Ottawa, ON Ord. 1989



Fr. Ed Wade
Philadelphia, PA Ord. 1972



Fr. Sean Wenger
Vernon, BC Ord. 1995



Companions of the Cross

Seminarians 2008 - 2009



David Bergeron
Granby, QC



Anthony Cafik
Victoria, BC



Leandro Chavarria
Fort Washington, MD



J.P. DeFleuriot
Johannesburg, South Africa



Paul DeKroon
San Francisco, CA



Lawrence Hyginus
Toronto, ON



Daniel Lehew
Dallas, TX



Sean Libby
Yarmouth, NS



Jim Lowe
Troy, MI



Bob Lowry
Portland, OR



Brian O'Neill
Montreal, QC



Bryan Sabourin
Ottawa, ON



Deacon Simon Lobo
Ottawa, ON



Deacon Carlos Martins
Kitchener, ON



Deacon Jamie Utronkie
Killaloe, ON

This photo display does not include first year applicants as they were featured in our Fall issue.



Companions of the Cross

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Number: _____ Expiry: ____ / ____ Amount: \$ _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

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from my account indicated below. I understand that I may cancel this transfer at any time by notifying the Companions of the Cross at least one month in advance.

Name of Financial Institution: _____

Bank Number Transit Number Account Number

Signature: _____

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ADVANCING THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

What is the Church's mission? Proclaiming the Kingdom of God and serving as the seed and beginning of that kingdom on earth. What is "advancement"? Carrying forward the Church's mission. Advancement is a process that requires leadership, the active participation of a community of faith, and resources (human, physical and financial).

As I travel around the country and talk to diocesan and parish leaders, I hear lots of concerns expressed about the economy, about social issues and "culture wars" (in the Church and in society), about the environment, and about political tensions here at home and throughout the world. These are challenging times. Some days it feels like we're just treading water - having trouble making ends meet (financially) and making little or no progress in carrying out the Church's mission.

How can our understanding and practice of stewardship help relieve the anxiety we feel about doing ministry in difficult times? How can stewardship principles serve as a source of hope and confidence in times of uncertainty like these?

One of the first principles of Christian spirituality is that God will provide (*Deus provedebat*). Stewardship builds on this principle. It reminds us that God's goodness and generosity are unlimited, the source of everything that exists. As the beneficiaries of God's abundance, we are called to "receive gratefully" and "share generously" all God's gifts (material and spiritual) in confidence and hope.

Trust in God's providence does not mean that we can sit by and do nothing. As stewards of creation, we are called to work tirelessly, to develop and grow God's gifts, and to "give them back with increase". It's because we trust in God's faithfulness that we refuse to be discouraged or defeated during times of adversity. As Christian stewards, we know that Christ has already achieved the victory we are fighting for. He is the source of our confidence and hope. He is the absolute assurance that God will provide!

And so, we continue to carry out Christ's work. We pray as he taught us. We minister to his people in his name. We give him thanks and praise in the Eucharist, recalling his supreme sacrifice of love, and we celebrate all the sacraments with gratitude and with joy because we know that God is always with us - in good times and in bad - giving us the courage and the strength to accomplish things that we could never do alone.

Stewardship is faith in action. It is what we do after we say we believe. It is practical spirituality - expressing our confidence in God's providence even when we're having trouble making ends meet or finding enough people to help carry the daily burdens of our Church's ministry.

True stewardship is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is the presence and power of God active in the world, making sure that we have everything we need to proclaim the Gospel and to be "the seed and beginning of that kingdom" here and now. The Spirit gives us everything we need. Sometimes we worry that it's not enough. We need more money. We need more people, better buildings, larger program budgets. We fear we do not have what we need (or, worse, that we ourselves are not enough). That's when the Holy Spirit gently reminds us that God has already given us everything we need, and more, to be grateful - responsible - generous stewards of all creation. That's when we remember God is with us always. And that God will provide.

Our job is to be grateful. To accept responsibility. To share generously out of justice and love. And to give back to God with increase. This is how Christian disciples respond to the challenges of tough times. With hope. With love. And with great joy. Please don't be discouraged in your ministry. Please don't lose heart (or hope). God will provide.

(Reprinted with permission, Dan Conway,
The Good Steward)



FEATURE

by Christine Labrosse

York U's "Light"

"For so the Lord has commanded us saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'."

The Catholic Chaplaincy at York (CCY) has been this "light" for students and faculty for many years now. Fr. Allan MacDonald, current chaplain at CCY said that their mission is to evangelize all the people with whom they come in contact. "We want to bring all into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to nurture them in a prayer life so as to send them out to evangelize others and keep the cycle going." This ministry has certainly been a "light to the nations" and has brought many young adults into a relationship with Jesus, the light of the world.

The Companions of the Cross have been involved with the chaplaincy since 1999. For 25 years prior to that it was led by the Holy Spirit Fathers. The 1,200 member chaplaincy is presently under the leadership of Fr. Allan MacDonald and Fr. Daren Bryk. The chaplaincy ministers to students, faculty and staff on campus and in the neighbouring housing developments. Fr. Allan said that the best way to describe CCY is to say, "It is a parish where most of the parishioners are 18 to 22 years old. Everything that is done in a parish (with the exception of a finance and parish council) is done here."

Most of the people involved with CCY are undergraduate students. York



University is what is called a "commuter campus" because close to 90% of the students don't live on campus, they commute daily. Perhaps because of the youthfulness of the "parishioners" they enjoy lively celebrations of the Eucharist with enthusiastic preaching and upbeat contemporary music.

They work out of a large Chaplaincy Centre in the main Student Centre on campus. Fr. Allan said it is a very coveted place to be because it is right at the heart of all the action on campus. Most of their activities and daily Mass are held here at this Centre. On Sundays, because the attendance is so high, they use a multi-faith chapel as it is large enough to accommodate the increased weekend numbers.

Fr. Allan and Fr. Daren have two full-time pastoral workers (a man and a woman) helping them with their work, as well as a half-time administrative assistant. With

the number of members they find they are very busy. Fr. Allan said that no two days are the same. "I never know who the Lord is going to bring through the door on any given day. I do enjoy it. Much of my ministry is a 'ministry of presence' – loving the students where they are at. It is very intense. There are so many students that most days our chaplaincy centre is a pretty packed place."

The chaplaincy is a high energy, dynamic place with plenty of activities and action. They offer a place for the students to pray, learn about their faith, be supported, encouraged and challenged to rise to the occasion and be a witness to hope on a very secular university campus.

The plan for this year's ministry is to empower the students to positions of leadership. This being the Year of St. Paul they will follow a three-fold pastoral plan. In Term 1 the retreat will be on conversion; the Term 2 retreat will be on prayer



and at the end of the year (August 2009) they will lead the students on a week-long “School of Evangelization” culminating in a “door-to-door” mission in a neighbouring housing development. This plan for ministry leads right into what Fr. Allan believes is the Lord’s heart for this mission, “To bring people out of darkness, hopelessness and secular confusion into a relationship of peace, love, purpose and fulfillment.”

The chaplaincy has grown incredibly in the last few years and Fr. Allan said their long term goal is to build a large, permanent place of worship for the exclusive use of CCY. Fr. Allan believes that God will provide for all that the chaplaincy needs in the future. He said, “I just take it one day at a time – if I think too much about the future, I miss out on what the Lord is doing today.”

What the Lord is doing today is providing a place of hope and light in the midst of darkness for an increasing number of young people on this campus. If you want to learn more about the chaplaincy visit their website: www.yorku.ca/catholic. The following testimonies speak to the tremendous impact the chaplaincy is having in young people’s lives.

Matthew McCarthy

As a student at York University in Toronto, I constantly face pressure, both academi-

cally and socially, to conform to secular ideologies, attitudes and viewpoints. It’s a tremendous comfort to know that CCY is a place on campus where I can take refuge in the real presence of Christ. It is in our chapel that I come face-to-face with the Lord, and obtain from him, who is the source of all strength, the grace I need to persevere in my Catholic faith. He has blessed our campus with the gift of himself, and for this I am most grateful.

The daily availability of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist and opportunities for sound spiritual direction, make the reality of the love of God so tangible to us. According to Fr. Allan, their mission as university chaplains is to help us respond to God’s call in each of our lives. Indeed, through their faithful encouragement and affirmation, I have experienced much peace and confidence in knowing that God has great plans for me. I have also experienced many Christ-centred friendships that have been strengthened and solidified by our common faith and membership in the mystical body of Christ. These relationships serve as a means of keeping each other accountable to our Christian commitment; in addition they provide us with opportunities to enjoy together many and varied social activities.

Aldora Harrison

The Catholic Chaplaincy at York University (CCY) holds a very special place in my

heart. I am a York alumnus, and I was drawn to the chaplaincy in my third year of study. It was and still is a very vibrant place, with people from all walks of life, each unique in their personalities, yet with a common bond of faith. I’ve made many friends through the chaplaincy and I continue to be in touch with most of them. Even after graduating in 2002 with my Business degree, and entering the workforce, I continued to be a frequent visitor at CCY.

I had a very profound experience in my personal faith journey while on retreat with other CCY members in the winter of 2001. CCY was truly my second home – in the craziness of a secular university campus, it was the oasis where I encountered Jesus.

Soon after I met my husband, Matthew, one of our first “dates” was to go to the Adoration at CCY on Thursday nights. Praying together before the Lord, in community with so many others, laid the foundation for our spiritual life together. We discerned the vocation of marriage together during many CCY Adoration nights.

The chaplaincy has always been tremendously blessed in the priests and staff that care for the students. Their commitment and love for the Gospel is inspiring! I pray that CCY continues to be blessed and that
Continued on page 16

it will continue to touch the lives of other students, as it touched ours.

Rachel MacDonald

I would like to share with you a taste of how God has used the Catholic Chaplaincy at York University (CCY) to bring about an enormous amount of joy and spiritual growth in my life; it has been the highlight of my university experience.

My understanding of the blessing of CCY as a resource and home has deepened. I am studying to teach religion and so, am required to take religious studies courses at York. They have proved to be very challenging and brought up many questions about faith and the Catholic Church. Thankfully these questions were always answered by the staff and I felt consistently encouraged and supported by other students at the chaplaincy.

Within the constant whirlwind of activity at the university, it is always uplifting to be able to attend Mass on campus; in such a secular environment, CCY provides a safe haven of real love. The gathering and meeting of students who share the faith is a very unique and awesome gift, and the role of the chaplaincy is integral in fostering friendships and much needed spiritual growth. The witness of other students who are in love with Jesus and his Church has opened me to him, the truth, whom I may not have encountered so powerfully otherwise. Had it not been for CCY, my faith and relationship with Christ would have likely remained feeble and immature. I know that many others have experienced similar exciting changes, so I have seen great renewal in faith through CCY.

The depth and breadth of the growth of the community at CCY has been amazing and inspiring. God is moving in huge and powerful ways, it is very exciting to see the transformation of hearts and lives and to be a part of something so vibrant and alive in Christ. ☺

Christine Labrosse is the Managing Editor of the Companions of the Cross Newsletter. She and her husband Charles are active members of St. Mary's parish in Ottawa.



TESTIMONY

by Lawrence Hyginus

"The only thing worth doing in life is God's will"

In September of 2000, I began my university studies at York University in Toronto. Beginning a new chapter in my life at the start of new millennium was a definitely an exciting time in my life. I looked forward to learning new ideas and meeting new people at university and had many expectations and hopes for my future. I never quite knew what I wanted to pursue in terms of a career, and so I started out in a business program thinking it would be a good place to start. But I soon discovered that it wasn't the right program for me. I enjoyed several Humanities courses that I had taken as electives, and so I eventually decided to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English Literature.

Studying at a secular university was often very challenging, especially when it came to living out my Catholic faith. I met people from various religious backgrounds who had a variety of worldviews and philosophies that challenged my own perspective. I began to question certain things about my faith, like "Is Jesus Christ just one of many paths that lead to God, or was he as the Church taught, The Way, The Truth, and The Life?" These and other questions started to surface in my mind, and I wanted to find the answers. Growing up in a practicing Catholic family, I wanted to make sure I didn't just believe in my faith because that was all I ever knew. Rather, I wanted to believe out of my own personal conviction of the truths of my faith. I felt the need to grow in the knowledge of my faith and to meet others who would support me in my pursuit for conviction. And so I got involved at the York Catholic Chaplaincy or "YCC" as we called it. This, as it turns out, was by far the best decision I made during my time at York!

"Is Jesus Christ just one of many paths that lead to God, or was he as the Church taught, The Way, The Truth, and The Life?"

Fr. Ben St. Croix was the chaplain during my years at university and he was a member of a relatively new community called the Companions of the Cross. I had heard and known a little bit about the Companions since they had recently been assigned to be the pastors of my home parish of St. Timothy. The impression I had of them was that they were a young community of priests from Ottawa who seemed to have a gen-



uine enthusiasm in living out their vocations and ministries. And this was the case with Fr. Ben. He was passionate in sharing his love and enthusiasm for the Gospel with us, the students. He also encouraged us to grow in faith and fellowship by organizing a variety of activities on campus, ranging from Bible studies, workshops, retreats, and socials. With time I began to meet many other young people who also wanted live and grow in their Catholic faith at university. By actively participating in the various activities at the chaplaincy, I began over the years to be convicted of the truths of the Catholic faith. I also established many strong friendships, many of which still last to this very day!

It was during the second year of my university studies that I began to seriously think about what I wanted to do with my life. I had the opportunity to learn about

the various Christian vocations of marriage, priesthood, and religious life, as these were some of the themes of the retreats and workshops organized by the chaplaincy. It was then that I began to be open to the possibility of the priesthood. I was drawn to the Companions' vision and community life, and so I decided to go to Ottawa for a "Come and See" visit with one of my friends from the chaplaincy in February of 2002. That was when I first met Fr. Bob Bedard, the founder of the community. He took time out of his busy schedule to sit down and chat with me. I remember one of things that he said that really stuck with me: **"The only thing worth doing in life is God's will."**

And with these words, I started to pray more intensely for the Lord to reveal his plan for my life, and to give me the courage and grace to respond to whatever that might be. During the last two years of

my studies at York, I had a growing sense of a call to the priesthood, and I felt that I couldn't really move on with my life until I properly discerned the matter. And so, with the grace of God, the support of my family, and the guidance of Fr. Ben and my other friends from the chaplaincy, I decided to apply to the seminary with the Companions of the Cross after completing my studies.

I entered seminary in the following September of 2004. I am privileged and grateful to be a part of this dynamic community of priests and seminarians. I am presently in my fourth year with the Companions of the Cross. I am currently studying theology at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto, and living at the Frassati House, which is very close to York University. The priests living in this house with me are Fr. Allan McDonald and Fr. Daren Bryk and they are the present chaplains at York. They're both doing wonderful work in helping the chaplaincy ministry grow and to have a stronger presence on the university campus. I have the awesome opportunity with the other Companions' seminarians to serve at the Sunday Masses at York and to once again be part of this vibrant community of faith. As I look back over the years, I am grateful to God for the many blessings that I have received during my time at the chaplaincy which has really helped me to grow in my faith and to pursue God's plan for my life.

I would like to close by echoing the words that spoke to my heart and which I hope will also speak to yours, especially to those of you that are discerning the call of God in your lives: **"The only thing worth doing in life is God's will."**
– Fr. Bob ☺



Join Our Team



Come and See Retreats

Houston, Texas March 19 to 22

Ottawa, Ontario April 15 to 19 and June 23 to 28

Next class begins August 2009.
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Contact Fr. Mark Goring CC,
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(613) 231-4806 vocations@companionscross.org



FEATURE

by Fr. John Vandenakker

Queen of Peace Celebrates Our Lady of Guadalupe

When we reflect on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12th) we learn two important lessons of faith: missionaries who first came to Mexico with the *Conquistadors* had little success in the early 16th century; after nearly a generation, only a few hundred Native Mexicans had converted to the Christian faith. Whether they simply did not understand the Gospel or whether they resented the people who had conquered them, Christianity was not popular among the native people.

Then in 1531 miracles began to happen. Jesus' own mother appeared to a humble native peasant named Juan Diego (now St. Juan Diego). The signs – of the roses in winter, of the uncle miraculously cured of a deadly illness, and especially of her own beautiful image imprinted on Juan's mantle (*tilma*) – convinced the people there was something to this Christianity. Within a short time, six million Native Mexicans had themselves baptized as Catholic Christians.

So the first lesson is that God has chosen Mary to lead us to Jesus. No matter what critics may say of the devotion of Mexicans (and Mexican descendants) to Our Lady of Guadalupe, they owe their Christianity to her influence. If it were not for her, they would not know her son, and so they are eternally grateful. The second lesson we take from Mary herself. Mary appeared to Juan Diego not as a European Madonna but as a beautiful Aztec princess speaking to him in his own Aztec language. If we want to help someone appreciate the Gospel we bring, we must appreciate the culture and the mentality in



which they live their lives. By understanding them, we can help them to understand and know Christ.

An incredible list of miracles, cures and interventions are attributed to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Yearly, 18-20 million pilgrims visit the Basilica in Mexico City, making it one of the Church's most visited sanctuaries. Altogether 25 popes have officially honoured Our Lady of Guadalupe. Pope John Paul II visited her Sanctuary four times: on his first apostolic trip outside Rome as Pope in 1979, and again in 1990, 1999 and 2002. During his 1999 visit, Pope John Paul II declared December 12th a Liturgical Holy Day for the whole continent (she is Patroness of the Americas). During the same visit Pope John Paul II entrusted the cause of life to her loving protection, and placed under her motherly care the innocent lives of children, especially those who are in danger of not being born.

Here at Queen of Peace parish, Houston, we celebrated a special 5:30 a.m. Mass in

Spanish that was packed with people! The entrance procession included dancers called *Matachines*, dressed in native Mexican costumes. Among the *Matachines* were three men dressed as Aztec "Witch Doctors". One of them even carried a "dead" baby doll strung to his waist, recalling the deaths of many infants in ancient Aztec rituals that demanded human sacrifice before the conversion of the natives. Music for the colourful liturgy was provided by a special *Mariachi* band from Monterrey, Mexico. After Mass, hot chocolate was served in the parish parking lot as the *Matachines* continued their impressive native dance recital. Although it had snowed here in Houston the night before (for the first time in four years), it was not that cold out for the festivities (although the locals beg to differ with me!). ☺

Fr. John Vandenakker is currently the Pastor at Queen of Peace parish in Houston, Texas.



COMMUNITY NEWS & NOTES

by Fr. Rick Jaworski

Earthen Vessels

Thursday, November 20, our Moderator Fr. Scott McCaig's long wait was over. Surgeons removed a large invasive cyst on top of Fr. Scott's carotid artery. After a few days of rest at the Lauzon's - Mary reports that Fr. Scott is a very good patient - he was back at home. Fr. Scott is very thankful for all the prayers on his behalf.

Fr. Scott joined the club of "surgery-recoverers". Fr. Michael Scherrey recovered very well from his gastric bypass surgery. He said he hopes to lose "one Jamie Utronkie". No, Fr. Michael has no sinister designs on our beloved deacon. It is, rather, some new-fangled weight measurement. On a sadder note, approximately one year after Fr. Michael suffered the loss of his father; his eldest brother, John, passed away. Please pray for the repose of John's soul and the consolation of his family and friends.

Our Founder, Fr. Bob Bedard, had a small device implanted to assist his heart (maybe because it's so "big"). Fr. Francis Ching fully recovered from his eye surgery, the results of which he was very pleased. In the spirit of Sirach 38, we give thanks to God and the doctors.

Foxes Have Holes

And so do our men in Toronto. To quote Fr. Randy Hendriks, "I'm excited to let you know that as of October 31st the Companions of the Cross have closed the deal on a house purchase in the St. Timothy neighbourhood. The brothers here in Toronto have named it "St. Paul" house to honour the year of St. Paul, and the fact that Paul was like a father to

Timothy. [. . .] The current rectory will be used for additional office space and meeting rooms."

The first month of ownership was dedicated to painting and renovations before our men moved in. A chapel was made and generously paid for by a parishioner. After sleeping over, Fr. Bernard Messier reported that it was quite cold. So, the extremely kind, benevolent, merciful, and generous Companions of the Cross Executive Council (can you tell I'm a member? *wink*) decided not to postpone work on the windows.

Foxes Have Holes. Well, maybe that line is better used of our Houston buildings. Fr. Francis Donnelly was on roof-squeegee-duty as he queued up with all the other Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston people to get approval on repairs. He might not have been the lonely bird on the roof, but he surely was like one crying out "How long, O Lord!"

Also in the aftermath of the hurricane, Queen of Peace Parish is still considering what to do about their parish hall (at this time of writing).

From the Rising to the Setting of the Sun

Continuing on with Houston news, seminarian Ruben Campbell got his U.S. citizenship. Fr. Francis Frankovich was an adviser to the U.S. Catholic Charismatic Conference. His 40th anniversary dinner was held on Saturday, November 15. It had been postponed due to Hurricane Ike. Special thanks to Deacon Tommy Vicnair who MC'd the evening and to all of our Houston Lay Associates and other volunteers who worked so hard to make the Catholic Charismatic Center hall look so



Fr. Francis Frankovich

festive. Fr. Francis was truly touched! In addition, we are grateful for everyone's generosity via ticket and raffle sales, along with a massive silent auction.

Houston's joy went on as witnessed in photos sent in by Fr. John Vandenakker of the Queen of Peace All Saints party (Oct. 31st), and Christmas pageant (Dec. 12th). The parish was packed for the traditional 5:30 am Mass kicking off the Our Lady of Guadalupe lively festivities, including a staff lunch.

Seminarian Brian O'Neill will switch from the Catholic Charismatic Center to doing more pastoral activities for his internship year at Queen of Peace Parish. Surprise! with air miles built up, Fr. Christian Riesbeck takes a break from his Canon Law (Church Law) studies in Ottawa, Canada to pay a ten-day visit to friends in Houston, USA. Unfortunately, U.S. immigration laws have changed and it will be harder for Fr. Michael Minifie to visit his ailing father back in Canada. Please pray for the family.



Fr. Michael Minifie with children at the Christmas pageant.

Halifax's loss was heaven's gain as Sr. Elsie Martin, pastoral associate for 43 years, died in September. The four parishes pastored by the Companions celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception together at St. Michael's. Fr. John Fletcher has been writing on the mystery of suffering, while Fr. Rob Arsenault has been working out on his Bowflex and using electrolysis to rid his sailboat's gas tank of rust. (Fr. Rob does a lot of excellent pastoral work, too.)

Continued on page 22



Celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in Halifax.

In Toronto, Deacon Tom Walsh became an associate of the Companions on September 14, the day on which St. Timothy's also started their Life Teen Mass (Sunday, 5:00 pm) with Phil Cummings. (Bishop Collins will be visiting this Mass in February.) St. Tim's started a "Growing Leaders" Arrow program in October (once a month for eight months); and will be having a "Catholicism 201" program around the end of January-beginning of February now that the Alpha program is over.

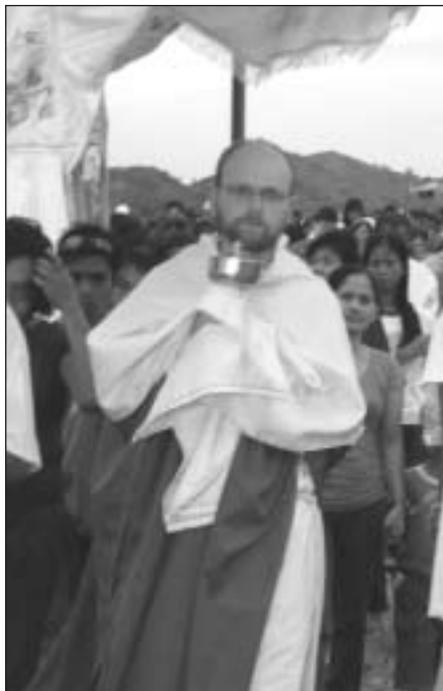


Deacon Tom Walsh became an associate of the Companions.

Unfortunately for our men at the Frassati House and York Chaplaincy, the teachers' assistants at York University at the time of this writing have been on strike. The professors will not cross the picket lines, and so there have been no classes for five weeks.

Having completed his scholastic work, David Bergeron left on November 11th for our CC Foundation in the Philippines, where he is doing his pastoral internship under the supervision of Fr. Charles Orchard. He has an extensive blog at <http://davidbergeroncc.blog.ca/>.

If you're thinking of visiting, Fr. Charles notes that a good time for pilgrimage is around Saturday at 4:30 pm when they



Fr. Charles Orchard leading procession.

have a Mass at Montemaria. He has also submitted a wonderful article in this newsletter with more information and listing web sites with news. He and David also keep in touch, seeing and chatting for free over the internet, with Skype. They swam in the ocean on a warm day (Dec. 1st) just a bit east of the base of Montemaria while, from a house far above them on a cliff, the music of Walking in a Winter Wonderland blared. Surreal!

This Man is my Chosen Instrument

Year of St. Paul – St. Timothy's will celebrate their Parish Feast one day early as they combine it with the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul in order to highlight this Pauline Year.

St. Timothy's may have a "St. Paul" house, but St. Maurice has St. Paul in the house. Frs. Galen, Scott, & Yves, and Deacon Simon, as a household, decided to watch Dr. Tim Gray's ten-part video series Adventures in 1 Corinthians (part of Jeff Cavins' *Adventures* series) as a

way of doing something together as a household for this Year of St. Paul proclaimed by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict.

And Fr. Ben had St. Paul outside the house. Fr. Ben St. Croix led an "In the Footsteps of St. Paul" Pilgrimage. Participants saw a great zeal for evangelization in Fr. Ben.

They went from Place to Place Preaching the Good News

Paul imitated Christ. So, Fr. Francis Ching went right to the top. From November 9-18, he led a pilgrimage in the Holy Land. The 39 travellers from southern Ontario were individually edified and grew together, having good fellowship and bonding as a family. The Scriptures really came alive for them; and the rosary too, as they prayed 18 of the 20 mysteries on site.

Fr. Dennis Hayes travelled... just across the river. He was the chaplain for the annual Women of Bethany Retreat in Gatineau-Hull (across from Ottawa). But he also will be conducting the Lenten Mission for Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Ottawa, and leading a four-day pilgrimage to Quebec shrines in June (organized from Blessed Trinity Parish, Toronto).

Fr. Francis Donnelly will be doing a parish mission in Colorado in early March. (There were a number of other speaking engagements not listed here.)

Snow May Come...

Retreat 2009 Lay Associates Ottawa – Over the past few years our retreat in February has been challenged by our Canadian weather. Our past two retreats were hit with terrible snow storms on the Friday night and Saturday mornings. Many people who had pre-registered for the weekends were unable to travel to the

Tudor Inn. We have decided to move the retreat to the spring where we will not have to deal with snow storms! We will be advertising our day-long retreat in the next newsletter.

Consecrated Lives

Sr. Alice Fougere writes, "We continue to hope and pray that the Queenship of Mary Community will be a great blessing within the Church. Our desire and the call that we have felt very strongly from the beginning is to prepare women so that they can be actively involved in the new evangelization in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Our daily life has a deep contemplative dimension as we seek to grow in intimacy with the Lord. We hope to build strong supportive relationships between the sisters so that they will be able to support one another, as well as, assist priests in varying areas of ministry."

The Queenship of Mary novices are spending a week a month at the Sisters of Our Lady Immaculate's formation house in Cambridge MA. (The latter are a well-established religious congregation.) Fr. Ben St. Croix led some parish missions in

southern Ontario this Advent with the assistance of the Queenship of Mary Community.

Both the Queenship of Mary Community and the Servants of the Cross are looking for larger residences. The Servants are putting together a website (www.servantsofthecross.com) which will probably be ready by the time you read this. We are blessed in that one of the Servants, Melinda Schenher, has joined us as a part-time Administrative Assistant. Melinda has worked as a receptionist, bookkeeper, operations manager, and most recently as Associate Director of the John Paul II Bible School in Radway, AB.

Come Holy Spirit

Particularly in response to what the Lord seemed to be asking as experienced by one of the parish small communities, Fr. Roger Vandenakker instituted a nine-day novena of worship and prayer at St. Mary's (Our Lady of Good Counsel) Parish, Ottawa. Although formulated for St. Mary's, the following prayer could be adapted, of course, for all of our communities:

Lord Jesus Christ, pour out your Holy Spirit upon our parish community at St. Mary's, and renew your wonders in this our age as by a New Pentecost.

United with Mary, Our Blessed Mother and Queen, and under her patronage as Our Lady of Good Counsel, we desire to extend your reign, O Divine Saviour, for the greater glory of the Father.

Therefore, we choose this day to seek you with all our hearts. We place our trust and confidence in you alone. We surrender to your mercy and grace in every area of our lives.

Heal the wounds our sins have inflicted upon us, and upon your Body, the Church, and strengthen our unity as brothers and sisters in this our family of faith.

Make us humble and lowly people. Help us to love and accept one another in our weaknesses and shortcomings, with sincere compassion and forgiveness, as you have loved and accepted each one of us in the depths of your Sacred Heart, for you are Lord, forever and ever. Amen. ☩

Fr. Rick Jaworski has a licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He was ordained in 1990.

Catholic Moral Decision-Making

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- How do I distinguish between moral gray areas and what is black and white?
- Is having a good intention and following your conscience enough?
- What should I do when a civil law contradicts the law of God?
- How do I decide whom to vote for?
- Is it always wrong to let someone die?

**Mondays April 20 - June 1, 2009
7:15 to 9:15 pm at
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**Presenter:
Fr. Terry Donahue, CC**

**Suggested Cost: \$70 for 7 weeks
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**Companions of the Cross
Lay Formation Program**

COMPANIONS OF THE CROSS
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
For the Year Ended
August 31, 2008

REVENUE

General Donations	\$ 1,083,752
Legacies and Bequests	88,916
Gifts-in-Kind	5,318
Other Income	186,096
Reimbursed Expenses	303,534

TOTAL REVENUE **\$1,667,616**

EXPENDITURES

Administration	\$ 160,352
Amortization	63,543
Communications	99,400
Financing Charges	4,811
Fundraising	173,647
Intra-Community	294,042
Outreach Programs	51,444
Programs for the Laity	56,824
Non-Local Priests	300,492
Residential Operations	253,326
Seminarian Formation	295,650

TOTAL EXPENDITURES **\$1,753,531**

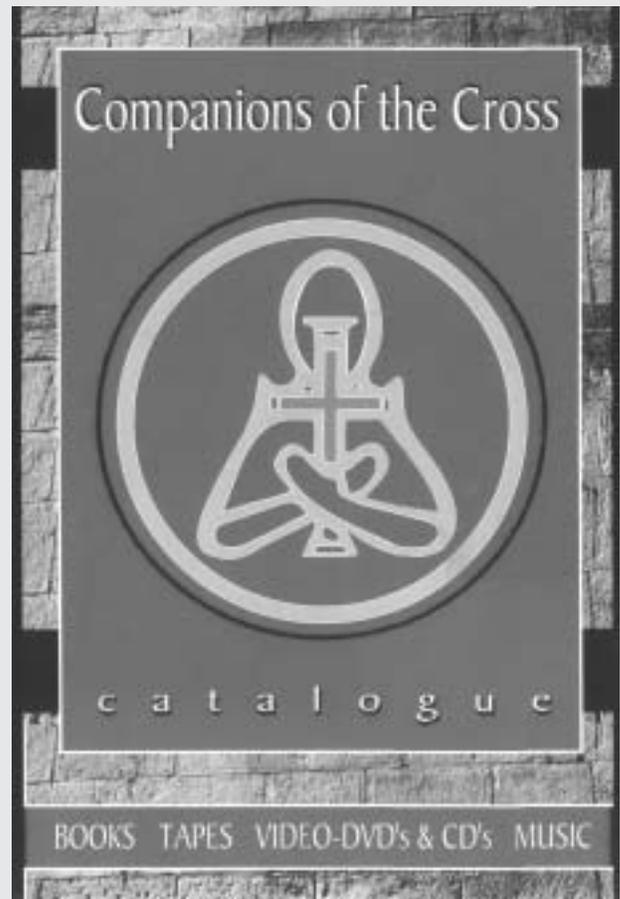
Operating Loss	(\$85,915)
Loss on Disposal of Investments	(\$1,361)
(Loss) Expenditures over Revenue for the year	(\$87,276)

Notes:

We carry liabilities of \$135,100.

The Statements of the Companions of the Cross have been audited by our auditors Parker, Prins & Lebano Chartered Accountants.

We are grateful to all our spiritual and temporal benefactors for their prayers and financial support over the past year. May the Lord bless you abundantly for your generosity.



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***“I am sure of this much:
that he who has begun the
good work in you will carry it
through to completion, right up
to the day of Christ Jesus.”***

(Philippians 1:6)