

On the Way

SPRING 2024
Issue No. 11



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On the Way

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EDITOR'S NOTE



GLORIA NIKOLIC,
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I remember growing up and dreading the beginning of Lent every year. I recall feeling an indescribable weight and a particular sadness settle on my heart as my family, and other Catholics around the world, entered the forty days of Lent. I realize now that my perception was based on my observation of practices that accompany the Lenten season –fasting from my favourite sweets, seeing churches stripped of their décor, and the solemn faces of parishioners around me. As I've grown older in age and in knowledge of my Catholic faith, I've come to understand the need for the practices that accompany this season. I've realized that Lent is not merely a period of worthless self-denial, where I must mournfully forego my favourite dessert after dinner. It's a special and sacred opportunity to unite these, ultimately minimal, sufferings with those of Jesus. Through this, we learn to detach ourselves from the fleeting pleasures of this world and embrace the eternal joy that can only come from our Creator.

However, with every Lent, that indescribable weight and sadness has lingered. In recent years, I've decided to lean into this feeling and see what God is trying to reveal to me through it. And I've felt Him place a question on my heart: As I've offered

Him all my minor sacrifices each Lent, whether it be giving up sweets, TV shows, or social media, am I authentically surrendering and entrusting Him with the greater sufferings in my life and the lives of those around me?

Lent provides us with an incredible, yet simultaneously painful, opportunity to fully uncover and relinquish the deepest parts of our hearts to Christ.

Throughout this On the Way issue, we reflect on the profound concept of redemptive suffering – the belief that we can unite our greatest pains with the very real pain that our Lord endured on Calvary for the redemption of all of us.

Jesus wants to journey with us on our own Calvaries. Let's let Him in and allow Him to accompany us as we fully embrace our own crosses, confident in His promise to turn even the greatest sufferings into redemption and eternal life. Let's allow Him to bring meaning and purpose to our suffering.

Because it is only through the sufferings on Calvary that we experience the joy on Easter Sunday.

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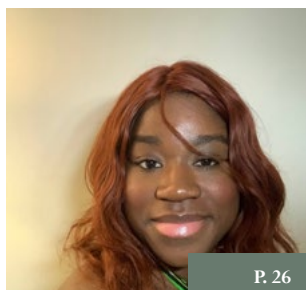
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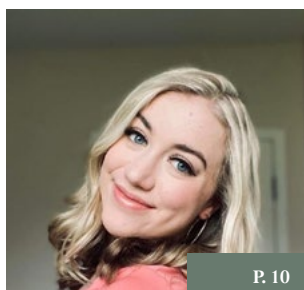
Contributors



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Amandine Agbodan

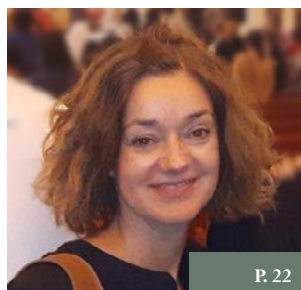
Amandine came to Canada with her parents and two sisters when she was just three years old, from a small country in Africa called Togo. She grew up in a Catholic household and is a member of Catholic Christian Outreach at her university, where she is currently working towards a bachelor's degree in Anthropology. She has a passion for reading and writing, which she pursues on the side. If she's not at the library, you will most likely see her in a museum or taking a stroll outside.



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Anna Richard

Anna Richard is a daughter, sister, proud auntie, godmother, nacho enthusiast, musician, baker, and gardener, amongst other things. She is a registered nurse that loves helping babies be born and is passionate about bringing peace to her patients. Anna has lived in the bright city of Winnipeg all of her life and is excited to be the Writing Editor of the Winnipeg Archdiocese's Youth and Young Adult creative website, Youthink. She loves to write about God's extraordinary love and the unique ways she has encountered Him.



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Gordana Nikolic

Gordana Nikolic emigrated from Croatia to Canada at age 29. Her home parish is St Ignatius, where she embraced the opportunities to grow in her faith and spirituality through the St Ignatius Exercises.

She has been involved in a number of ministries, but the closest to her heart is Prison Ministry.

Her hope is to continue to seek and find God and His grace in every situation.



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Fr Mark Filips

Fr Mark Filips has been serving as Chaplain at Stony Mountain Institution and St Paul's College, University of Manitoba since August 2022. He was ordained for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg in 2011.



Jason Cabalang Cegayle

Jason Cabalang Cegayle is the Regional Animator for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – Caritas Canada for the regions of Manitoba and Thunder Bay. He graduated with his Bachelor of Education from the Université de Saint-Boniface and is passionate about working with young people in his role as Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leader at Mary, Mother of the Church Parish.



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Judith Vasquez

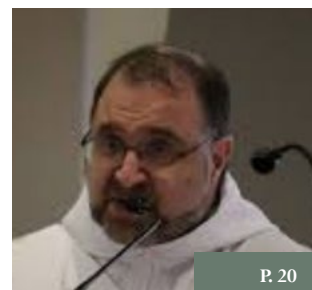
Judith is the Archdiocese of Winnipeg's Director of Catechetics and Faith Development. In her spare time, she enjoys watching TV and playing games with her children – whatever they happen to come up with on any given day! She is a parishioner of St. Patrick's Church in Winnipeg.



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Tyyne Petrowski

Tyyne Petrowski is the Director of Archives for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. She has a BA (Hons) in History and Catholic Studies, and an MA in Archival Studies. She is the mother of two children, and enjoys cooking, baking, reading, and travel. She is a member of Our Lady of Victory Memorial Parish in Winnipeg.



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Deacon Gilles Urquhart

Deacon Gilles Urquhart currently serves at St Emile Parish in the Archdiocese of St Boniface. He has been a deacon since 2008. He enjoys working in his two ministries: RCIA and Courage. He is also the owner of Stephanchew Church Goods.

Amy Almazor

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Amy emigrated to Canada in 1974, and has served as a catechist, lector, and communion minister.

She is a participant of the Nathanael formation program and is an active parishioner at St. Edward the Confessor Parish.



A TALE OF TWO Churches

The title of this article seems to be about two churches, but in fact, it is not; it is about what we Catholics call “redemptive suffering.” The two churches in question are only involved because they were the venues where the real subject of this article was given birth. Let me explain.

St. Patrick’s Church in Winnipeg invited me to preside and preach on their 70th anniversary and Luke 5:1-11 was chosen for the Gospel. Jesus said to the disciples: “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon Peter responded, “Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.” They caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break, and Jesus said to the frightened disciples: “Do not be afraid, for from now on you will be catching people.” I reminded the congregation that the part of the church where they were sitting is called a “nave,” a word taken from Latin meaning “boat.” I explained that from ancient times, a boat or ship has been a symbol of the Church. In the Gospel, Jesus was sitting in Simon Peter’s boat and said that we are to be *fishers of people*. Jesus is with us as we sit in the “barque” of Peter, and we must also fish.

There is a kind of suffering we take on because of our faith, a suffering which causes us to go against the world and its ways, even against ourselves. And yet, it produces a mysterious fruitfulness if we dare “put out into the deep.” We might say with Peter, “I’m too tired,” or “It is useless,” “There are no fish,” or “I’m too busy to bother,” etc. But Jesus says to us, *do not be afraid, go ahead and lower your nets*. This kind of suffering is redemptive because our witness to Christ can win souls for Christ; our own and others. This might involve the suffering resulting from living

our Catholic faith at home- raising a Christian family during these days when faith is lacking and challenged. Or it might include the suffering that is involved in building up our parish community through generosity and toil so that the next generation may be blessed. St. Peter learned this lesson and he said in his Second Letter, “Be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another...be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” This sort of suffering is redemptive because we become fishers of people for Christ. But, at the same time there is a mysterious joy and happiness that comes from this. This is the “fruitfulness”. Peter’s words should be our words: “Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

The very next day, I was at Our Lady of Victory Parish for the 5th Sunday of Lent. Yes, there is a “nave” there, too, but it is in a “*cruciform*” shape: the shape of a cross. Along the wooden walls, there is a very large, colourful, even dramatic depiction of the Way of the Cross. I spoke of the barque of Peter being imbued with the Cross of Christ. Jesus said that “*Unless you pick up your cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.*”

There is a kind of suffering that is simply part of life, and it is to this suffering that Jesus speaks of in John 12:20-33: “*Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit...the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” The seed that Jesus refers to is himself, his death and resurrection, and our dying and rising in him. We come together to celebrate the Eucharist, in Peter’s boat, bearing the Cross of Christ, and we offer ourselves, all that we are, all



that we hope to be, our joys and our sorrows, to the Father through Christ. We offer all that may come our way, be it sickness or accident, disappointment or loss; be it the struggle in marriage, or the priesthood; be it the call to love the neighbour and the enemy; be it having a heart of patience and charity towards others- all of this involves suffering that is redemptive if joined to Christ- redemptive for ourselves and for those we witness to and pray for. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we learn: “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; having been made perfect, he became the source of *eternal salvation for all who obey him.*”

People of faith have always built hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics around the world in order to relieve suffering, but at the same time, our faith teaches the world that there is a meaning in suffering beyond the wisdom of the world- a meaning grounded in the teaching and example of the Almighty Himself who came and shared in our life, sufferings and joys.

Brothers and Sisters, let us keep on rowing, putting up the sails, for the Lord is at the tiller.

REDEMPTION THROUGH

the Sacrament of Reconciliation



As we travel along the hillside of life, the road can be both smooth and rough, and we all experience the ups and downs that happen in different periods. Throughout it all, everyone needs redemption.

Our natural condition was characterized by guilt: “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). Christ’s redemption has freed us from guilt, being “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

My faith has been challenged, and when this has happened, I’ve turned to God for help. I’ve prayed fervently, and help has always been granted through Him leading me to the Sacrament of Penance. I always feel like a new human being after reconciliation. I feel loved, forgiven, freed, reconciled, and redeemed. This is spiritual redemption!

We should not be suffering from any sins and guilt. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in the person of a priest, is waiting for us to sit with Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation with our open hearts! Back when I taught catechism, there was a day that priests from a particular deanery were offering their time for the children, parents, and catechists to have confessions. I really encouraged all parents to receive the sacrament of reconciliation and was particularly touched by one parent; when I encouraged him to receive the sacrament, he looked down with tears filling his eyes. When he looked back at me, I told him he’d be alright, and then he went for confession. He came back and thanked me from the bottom of his heart with a smile of great joy and happiness; he was redeemed.

“But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves to sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17-18).

We do not need to live in misery because of our sin. We do not need to mentally flog ourselves or pay the price because of our sins. Jesus satisfied that debt of sin. The price of sin has been completely paid. However, since we all share in the suffering of Jesus our Lord, He instituted the seven sacraments, and from there, the two healing sacraments exist: the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. These two healing sacraments help us heal and become redeemed.

For individuals who are near death, the Sacrament of the Sick is an incredible blessing. My family encountered this first-hand as my mother prepared to meet our Maker. The priest gave her the “Viaticum,” the last rite that offers spiritual comfort and prepares a person for death. Viaticum is a Latin word meaning “provisions for a journey.”

Jesus said to St. Faustina: “Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to my mercy.” (Diary 300;699). Besides the life-saving gifts of the Sacraments, fervent and persistent prayer is the foundation of all our other efforts. The book of Job can inspire us to continually seek God in times of difficulty. Job was an upright man who suffered from much trial and distress. He lost his children and property but never lost hope, and he prayed constantly. God heard and redeemed him. We must continuously seek the healing touch of the Lord through prayer and the gift of the Sacraments, especially in our most difficult times. By dying on the cross, Jesus healed us because of His great compassion, mercy, and unending love; and he continues to do so through the gift of reconciliation.



Staff Spotlight

CARLA A'BEAR

TELL US ABOUT YOUR ROLE AT THE CATHOLIC CENTRE!

I am the payroll administrator, which means I not only oversee payroll for the Catholic Centre but also for parishes in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg and for some of the Catholic Schools.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT THE CATHOLIC CENTRE?

I have been here for a bit more than ten years!

IN YOUR SPARE TIME, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN?

I love reading during the winter, and gardening during the summer and fall; those are my two passions. In between that, I love cleaning up and repainting my garden gnomes. I have a little collection of them and enjoy going to garage sales and finding new ones to add to it.

A PATH *to Wholeness*

It was a long three years of unanswered questions, hospital stays and deep anxiety. For part of these years, my mother said that her daily physical pain was worse than childbirth. Having birthed five of us, she knew what she was talking about. We had no answers as to the causes of her illness, and endless doctors, it seemed, had tried to form a diagnosis with no success.

It was hard to trust.

It was difficult to believe that the God that I loved, and who I knew loved me, would let this happen. I went through my own journey of emotional suffering, while watching my mother; the deep, life-long fear of losing her was threatening to become a reality.

But the Lord drew my family close. He gave us tangible graces that helped us to know He was present and had not abandoned us. These included profound words from family and friends, undoubtedly ordained conversations between my mother and other patients in the hospital, strong experiences, and images in prayer, and so much more.

During this season, my father would repeatedly tell us this:

"I don't want Mom to die. But if she does, I am fully convinced that God is still good and worthy of our trust and love, and we need to surrender to His Will."

Although this was extremely difficult to hear, it pointed me to the path of learning to trust in God's goodness through the midst of suffering, and the graces that I received from this experience were like none other in my life.

Also, during this time, someone shared with me that living on this earthly side of life is like living on the bottom of a tapestry. The threads are tangled and look like a big mess. It isn't until Heaven that we can see the top of the tapestry, and the beautiful image that was being formed becomes perfectly clear.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." — Romans 8:18 (Make a pop-up quote).

As we walked through all of this, my mother described finding herself more united to Jesus in his suffering and death, and I, on the other hand, found myself relating to Mother Mary as she journeyed with Jesus to Calvary.

Praise be to God, my mom did find answers and healing through surgery in 2018, and lives healthily and well today. In many ways, it felt like a resurrection in my life. Not only through the new life related to her physical healing and presence in our family, but also through the realization that some of my own weaknesses and mistrust in God had been 'put to death' and resurrected as new trust in His goodness and presence. Of course, my weak humanity still needs copious amounts of work and healing, but I could see the growth that had occurred.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." — Galatians 2:20

Recently, I have been walking with someone through the difficulty of chronic illness. There was a wound that resurfaced in my heart, the familiar feeling of



dread. I found myself praying, “Lord, I don’t know if I can do it again. I don’t know if I can watch someone I love suffer without answers or the promise of healing.”

I felt our Lord gently reminding me:

You can’t fully experience the glory of my resurrection without first experiencing the pain of my passion. (Make pop-up quote)

Is this not true in even the simplest of examples? We can’t fully appreciate food unless we have experienced hunger. A healthy respiratory system is never quite as amazing to us until after we have had a cold. The list can go on.

Friends, we are made for resurrection.

The suffering of this life, the result of sin, is painful and real. But Christ loved us too much to let that be the end.

He made a way to redeem all suffering for glory.

Restoration is coming. Whether it is the restoration we can tangibly see on earth-side, or the glory that will only be revealed on heaven-side, it is real and it is coming.

These are vulnerable places in our hearts. Suffering is so hard. But we are not alone.

I invite you to join me in a prayer during moments and seasons of suffering:

“Lord, I don’t like this situation/suffering: _____. But I thank You for this situation because I know You are good, and You are doing something good through it.”

When we are honest about our feelings with God, it builds intimacy (and He can take your honesty!). In addition, when we declare our choice to believe in His goodness and His ability to work all things for good, it reorients our hearts to a posture of trust and rest.

Where are the areas in your life where you are suffering? Our Lord invites you to discover His presence with you. He has never left. He is always waiting to be found by you and for you to allow Him to make your heart whole through your suffering.

And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. — Romans 8:28

YOUNG PEOPLE AT *the Heart of the Church of the Poor*

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – Caritas Canada hosted their second THINKfast with high school students from the Manitoba Catholic Schools, including St. Maurice Parochial School, St. Mary's Academy, St. Paul's High School and St. Boniface Diocesan High School. On February 23, 2024, over thirty students participated in a 24-hour fast, inspired by the work of global solidarity for the poor, as a meaningful and impactful way to engage in the journey of Lent.

‘The young want to be protagonists of change. Please, not leave it to others to be protagonists of change!’ – Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, Apostolic Exhortation on Young People (174)

Youth Leadership at the heart of justice and charity

Ask these young people what they would give up for Lent, and it is guaranteed that you will not get the conventional response: *“fasting from chocolate.”* Rather, for twenty-four hours, thirty-five students fasted from basic comforts, including sleep and food, and made space in their days for prayer and dialogue on social injustices.



The Canadian Catholic Organization for Peace – Caritas Canada, supports the faith of young people by providing an experience for students to encounter the reality of our brothers and sisters living in poverty. Since 1988, THINKfasts have taken place throughout Canada as an immersive experience for students to enhance their Lenten journeys by fasting, praying, and learning about the root causes of poverty in the Global South. Students are then *sent forth* to mobilize their community throughout the year to partake in local and community actions, inspired by Catholic Social Teaching and the partners of Development and Peace.

Twelve young social justice advocates were selected by their teachers in grades 11 and 12, as THINKfast School Ambassadors, with the goal of being social advocates for their communities. These young leaders from St. Mary's Academy, St. Maurice Parochial School, St. Paul's High School and St. Boniface Diocesan High School received an interactive formation on February 5th and 6th, 2024, at St. Charles Retreat Centre. Their formation included an engaging activity on advocacy from Dean Detloff, Advocacy Officer for Development and Peace. Students also virtually welcomed Rebecca Rathbone from the Vatican; she is an officer promoting Youth Leadership from Caritas Internationalis, and she spoke to students about the role of young people in the second-largest global humanitarian organization in the world. Lastly, students received a workshop from Veronica Diestro, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, on the importance of prayer in the mission of social justice.

Serena Soc, a student ambassador from St. Mary's Academy, said, "the THINKfast Leadership Retreat had a positive impact on me mentally and spiritually; specifically, when it comes to nourishing my relationship with God. I am glad for the opportunity to fast in solidarity with the hungry, poor and oppressed, supporting Development and Peace, and I honestly had the best time of my life at THINKfast!"



THINKfast – An invitation for encounter

Pope Francis calls us to a culture of encounter, and there is nothing more fulfilling than seeing several young people come together to fast and put themselves in the shoes of someone living in poverty.

Students participated in an interactive workshop on the *Reaping our Rights* Share Lent Campaign, learning about the work from HOMEf (Health of Mother earth Foundation) in Nigeria. Founded in 2011, HOMEf works on issues of climate justice, food sovereignty and oil pollution and defending farmer's rights. Students also learned about the work of PAYOPAYO in Indonesia, which encourages village communities to work together to support rural farming for youth. Lastly, students also learned about the work of the Fundación Nuna Bolivia, supporting local Indigenous peasant farmers in agricultural transformation and income diversification. With the increasing consequences of climate change and political unrest, students were not made to feel despair but rather inspired by the innovative and creative ways of the partner organizations to be agents of their own social change.

Any THINKfast is not complete without prayer. Seeing the students lift the THINKfast Cross during the Development and Peace Way of the Cross from one station to the other by candlelight is an inspiring image of hope for anyone. St. Vital Parish was filled with beautiful harmony, stillness, and reflection on finding God in the poor, all led by the students.

Development and Peace President Brenda Arakaza was also present in person and shared her story with students. She shared about her experience with Caritas Internationalis back in Burundi, her experience as a Youth Representative on National Council, and her current experience as president.

At the end of the fast, students celebrated Holy Mass with the faithful of St. Vital Parish, presided by Fr. Wayne Morrissey and Fr. Charles Fillion, Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. Inspired by El Salvadorian Bishop St. Oscar

Romero, students processed with the THINKfast Cross, which was signed by the students and blessed by Fr. Wayne Morrissey. The THINKfast Cross will travel from one school to the other until it arrives at the school that will host the next THINKfast. Following Mass, students broke their fast with a feast and continued fellowship.

Xavier Downey, student at St. Paul's High School, says, "THINKfast let me understand that countries in the Global South can be developed simply by understanding the root causes. I was thrilled when I found out what Caritas Internationalis does and its impact on communities and the attention they bring to allow people to prosper."

According to Pope Francis, "social engagement and direct contact with the poor remain fundamental ways of finding of deepening one's faith and the discernment of one's vocation" - Christus Vivit, Apostolic Exhortation on Young People.

Inspired by this message of encounter, THINKfast School Ambassadors will mobilize their school communities until Pentecost Sunday to educate and mobilize their peers on the root causes of poverty. Let us continue to keep these students at the heart of our prayers. We pray that they may be social agents who share the light of Jesus with the marginalized through global solidarity.



Pause for Prayer

“Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt – often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses – today, too, God’s people can cling to an oppressive bondage that [they are] called to leave behind. We realize how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love (cf. *Hos 2:16-17*). *God shapes his people; He enables us to leave our slavery behind* and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.”

Message of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for Lent 2024

St. Joseph's Journey



St. Francois Xavier

As Catholics, we often display artwork of the saints in our homes and churches, helping us to remember and honour those holy men and women that went before us. Such paintings, statues, stained glass, and other artworks become a familiar part of these spaces, and the saints depicted can inspire us to follow their example in living holy lives. When these works are damaged, it can feel like the loss of a favourite family photo, and may be just as challenging to replace.

When the parishioners of St. Francois Xavier parish in Manitoba found their church vandalized on May, 26th, 2019, among the spaces and items damaged were some of the community's statues. For over two years, the community worked through the insurance process, and through that, they were able to replace angel statues and have their statue of St. Mary restored. Unfortunately, their statue of St. Joseph and the child Jesus was determined to be beyond repair.



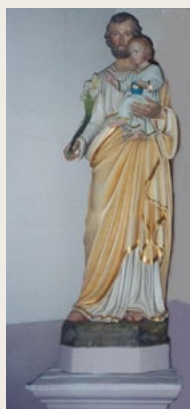
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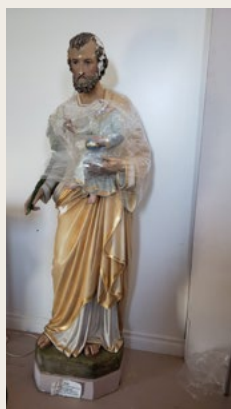
St. Francois Parish now



Nova Scotia St. Joseph statue



St. Joseph (Before)



St. Joseph damaged



After another year of attempts to replace the statue with a similar piece to no avail, the parish received approval to order a new statue in February 2022. A piece was ordered from a shop in the United States, but despite having paid the full fee and costs of international shipping up front, by February 2023, St. Francois Xavier church had still not been sent a statue. Their requests for a refund were met with no response. It took filing formal complaints with US agencies, and further follow-up to finally receive their payment back in May 2023.

In the autumn of 2023, the parish community of St. Francois Xavier renewed their efforts to find an older statue more in line with the style and era of their original statue of St. Joseph. Diane Coble-Kendall of St. Francois Xavier parish reached out to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg Catholic Centre, and shared with Tynne Petrowski, Director of Archives, the story of the efforts to replace the statue. Tynne provided a list of possible sources for decommissioned parish artworks in Manitoba and neighbouring provinces. Unfortunately, the St. Francois Xavier parish was not able to find anything suitable through these contacts.

Meanwhile, Tynne reached out to other archivists via the network of the Catholic Archives Group, an association of archivists working in dioceses, religious institutes, and Catholic institutions across Canada. She explained the situation in St. Francois Xavier via an email in early December 2023, and asked if anyone knew of other sources of decommissioned parish statues that might meet the parish's needs, providing a photo of the damaged statue from St. Francois Xavier parish. Within the same day, Tynne received an email from Sharon Riel, archivist for the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth in Nova Scotia. Sharon responded with a photograph of a nearly identical statue, stating that it was

from a church which had recently closed due to parish consolidation and that she would follow up with her chancellor and the parish to inquire about availability.

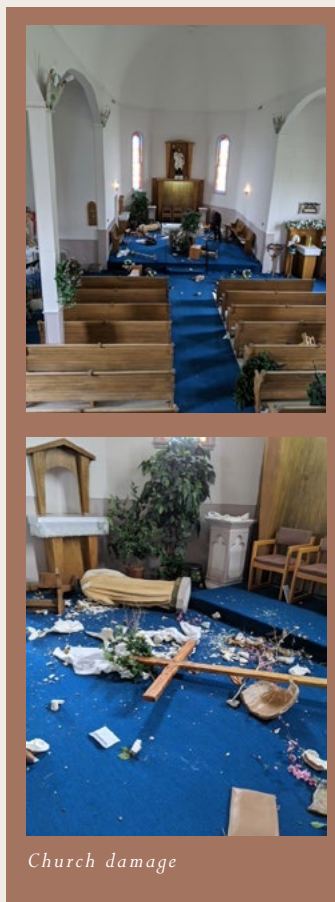
Following the Christmas holidays, Sharon heard back from the Paroisse Notre Dame D'Acadie, the new parish which includes the community formerly known as Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, whose church had been home to the St. Joseph statue. The pastor and parish representatives had agreed to donate the statue to the St. Francois-Xavier parish community! After sharing the joy that an appropriate statue had been found, the next step was to solve the question of how to get a historic statue transported from rural Nova Scotia over to rural Manitoba.

Hopes were to bring the statue from Concession, NS to Halifax as soon as possible, to have it shipped from the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth office to the Archdiocese of Winnipeg office, and then on

St. Francois Xavier, MB. While delays have occurred, the plan in place is that the statue will arrive in Halifax during the last week of March 2024, and be properly packaged and shipped to Winnipeg in April. We hope to celebrate the installation of the "new" statue of St. Joseph with the St. Francois Xavier parish community in May 2024. Many thanks to Diane Coble-Kendall and Sharon Riel for their ongoing efforts in this endeavor!

While this story is still ongoing, we wanted to share with our Archdiocesan community this beautiful testament to shared faith across distances. A providential connecting of historically francophone communities, with one able to assist another halfway across the country. While the journey might be nearly 3000 kilometers, and 5 years in the making, we know that a new connection has been forged by generosity and gratitude, and the fruit of it is joy.

St. Joseph, Pray for Us!



Church damage

Prayer for Trust and Confidence

“O LORD, WE ASK FOR A BOUNDLESS CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN YOUR DIVINE MERCY, AND THE COURAGE TO ACCEPT THE CROSSES AND SUFFERINGS WHICH BRING IMMENSE GOODNESS TO OUR SOULS AND THAT OF YOUR CHURCH. HELP US TO LOVE YOU WITH A PURE AND CONTRITE HEART, AND TO HUMBLE OURSELVES BENEATH YOUR CROSS, AS WE CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN OF HOLINESS, CARRYING OUR CROSS THAT LEADS TO HEAVENLY GLORY. MAY WE RECEIVE YOU WITH GREAT FAITH AND LOVE IN HOLY COMMUNION AND ALLOW YOU TO ACT IN US, AS YOU DESIRE, FOR YOUR GREATER GLORY. O JESUS, MOST ADORABLE HEART AND ETERNAL FOUNTAIN OF DIVINE LOVE, MAY OUR PRAYER FIND FAVOUR BEFORE THE DIVINE MAJESTY OF YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

AMEN.”

- ST. PADRE PIO

FINDING GOD IN SUFFERING

Through Prison Ministry

I recently read an article that began with the words, “We live in very dark and confusing times.” Indeed, while most of us struggle to watch the nightly news (because of all the horrible things happening in our world), the reality for many inmates in prison is also “very dark and confusing.” Imagine being handcuffed, shackled around your ankles, stripped, and searched, and sitting in a tiny cell waiting to find out where you will be placed within the system. You can’t simply ‘phone anyone, and the answers you are given are usually not very helpful.

When accepted and offered up in union with Christ’s own Passion, Redemptive suffering can remit punishment for our sins, and even the sins of others. This is indeed a very challenging concept to try and grasp fully!

During my time as Chaplain to the inmates at Stony Mountain Prison, I have come to understand that punishment (or suffering), when tempered by mercy, has the power to help transform people. In fact, I had one inmate tell me that I was “too soft” and that I needed to realize that whatever suffering happens in prison helps them evaluate what needs to change in them. As the inmate begins to demonstrate good character and a sincere desire to change, their suffering becomes less and less, and they are afforded more and more privileges. They grow!

I personally learn a great deal from the people I minister to in prison. They teach me to embrace the trials that I happen to be going through, while always holding on to the hope that God’s mercy is constantly at work. We must remember that God does not abandon us, especially when things are very dark and confusing.



REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING:

A Gift?

Everyone encounters suffering. Some face it more than others. Some look like they don't suffer, but it is unseen inside. Some rarely suffer, while for others it is their constant companion. Suffering takes all kind of forms: psychological, physical, emotional, or spiritual. Whether we directly experience it or someone dear to us does, we all encounter suffering.

There is something unique to the Catholic approach to suffering.

Like all Christians, we know Jesus embraced human suffering through his passion and death. Jesus is God with us. He shares in our suffering to let us see that He knows our pains and anguishes.

The uniquely Catholic part is our belief that in uniting our suffering with His, we share in the redemption of Christ. In some way, beyond our comprehension, we participate in helping others open to grace by our prayerful offering of our sufferings.

When my father was dying, I saw how suffering brought my dad a willingness to be open again to the Lord. Suffering took away the barrier that was in his heart and allowed Jesus to reconcile my dad to Himself. Jesus can allow suffering to be a wake-up call that we are dust and to dust we shall return. It can open us up to repentance by showing us our vulnerability.

With my mom's Alzheimer's, I learned another side of the lesson of suffering. Seeing what my mom went through brought me a greater feeling of compassion. Those close to the sufferer in their love grow in compassion and empathy for their loved one.

Suffering in and of itself is not good. If we can

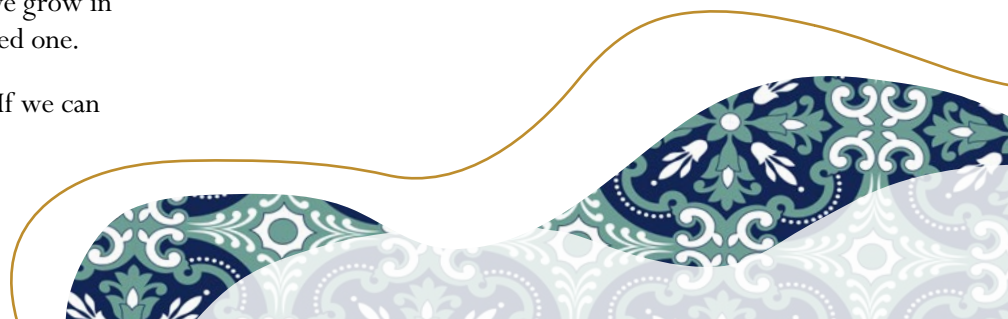
alleviate it, we should. But given the extent that we cannot make it go away, we can find redemptive meaning in giving the sufferings we have to Jesus.

Lent of course is a time when our prayer, fasting and almsgiving are meant to point us outward to the suffering of others, to the poor, the outcast, the sick and all those suffering. In our own way, we deprive ourselves (through fasting and almsgiving) so that others may be helped by our tangible giving.

Redemptive suffering is a spiritual way of giving. Being able to "offer" to God the various sufferings we face is a gift. This doesn't take the pain away, but it does provide a meaning to the pain or sorrow as a way of participating in what Jesus has done. Instead of turning to bitterness, anger, or self-pity, when we walk the path of redemptive suffering, we can turn it into a gift to God. In this way, we become a witness to the power of Jesus Christ; we change the meaning of suffering from a curse to a way to unite ourselves with His self-sacrificial love.

Our society runs away from this idea.

Moral values have shifted in our times, haven't they? For example, when faced with a serious medical issue, the quick fix seems to be to turn to MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying). Now, it is legal to euthanize someone, just as it has been legal to abort for so long now. Now, we laud subjective feeling over objective truth.





In my opinion, much of this new mindset has to do with the question of how we deal with suffering. Without Christian values to lean on - our secular society takes the short-circuit approach. In acting that way, they reduce human existence to a matter of productivity rather than a value in and of itself belonging only to God's plan rather than human control. No longer is it surrendering to God's will but taking matters into our own hands. This reverses the path taken by redemptive suffering.

We gain a lot of insights from the saints throughout the history of the Church who have taught us by their teaching and, more profoundly, by their example of how to live out redemptive suffering.

A recent example of a saint who used his suffering as a prayer was Pope St John Paul II. He modelled for us how to endure pain and even how to die.

He was a powerful witness to the Gospel of Life that he preached so much about. His trust in Jesus and the Blessed Mother showed us that we can suffer redemptively with peace, grace, and love.

Our Catholic values and our Catholic way of life may not be cool in 2024, but I believe it is very much worth it.

Jesus Christ has the only answer to human suffering: use it as a gift of sacrificial love.

When we do this, our lives become transformed, we move from Good Friday to Easter Sunday!



FINDING GRACE *in Suffering*

“Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (C.S. Lewis)

As my migraine-exhausted eyes find the crucifix, carved in dark mahogany wood, depicting Jesus in a deep moment of agony, balanced in its apparent symmetry, breaking the whiteness of the otherwise bare bedroom wall, something shifts in my heart; wordless comfort settles in to give me more strength to endure the pain of the moment.

Migraines can be debilitating and limiting; they can be long-lasting and nagging. They don't care about your plans. The energy which motivates one's body and mind to live life in fullness, to serve and share, becomes reduced to simply waiting for the pain to end.

My hand finds the wooden rosary beads that are so dear to me. These beads always bring up a memory from years back: my pilgrimage to Medjugorje. It's a vivid memory filled with neat lines of vineyards, morning sunlight and rusty brown powdered soil beneath the rocks lining the path to Cross Mountain. I had made a quick stop to purchase this rosary, which is simple, strong, and enduring in a dark, purple ink colour, now faded from the years of use.

At times, I am just able to say “Jesus” with each bead, and it feels like there is movement; the Holy Spirit is at work. This simple prayer does not sound like much, but by the grace of God, I know it is enough.

God's transformative love uses our gifts of pain to build the Kingdom of God in mysterious ways.

Charles Dickens's words from *A Tale of Two Cities* come to mind:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Do we have a choice in how we respond to hardships, sadness, or suffering?

With God's grace, I believe we do.

This choice towards God's grace can be described as a micro-movement of the heart and can be as simple as gazing towards Him in hope. We need nothing else but a willingness to open the gate so that He can enter.

Pope Francis said that, “there is a form of sorrow that is part of our conversion and can be transformed into joy with God's grace. However, [the other form of sorrow] makes the soul despondent. This second form must be fought with all our strength because it comes from the evil one.”

One form of sorrow is moved with grace to seek God in all circumstances, to cling to hope and become a soft clay, pliable and open to the creativity of the Divine Artist.

The other is brittle and dangerously dark and destructive. May God equip us to fight the good fight in addressing our sorrows. May we use them as a steppingstone to reach fulfilment, which comes from God.

We all suffer in various ways. If we can ask for the grace to see this as an invitation to come closer

to God and nurture the understanding heart, we would also have inner knowledge of the pain of others we encounter in our lives, regardless of whether this person is in our family, work place, or a stranger we meet on our own way from Jerusalem to Jericho as the good Samaritan did.

In a recent Friday Report, Archbishop Richard Gagnon reminded us to pray for the intercession of St Josephine Bakhita. She is a saint who knew the dark depths of suffering, starting with being kidnapped and forced to walk barefoot for 600 miles to the slave market in Africa as a child. When asked what she would do if she were to meet her captors, her answer was: "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today."

Will I allow Christ to transform my suffering to new understandings and deeper love for Him?

I sure hope so. Through this I might experience glimpses of God's glory and respond by serving others with compassion.

The book of James reminds us that whenever we face trials of any kind to "consider it nothing but joy" because we know that the testing of our faith produces endurance, and by letting endurance have its full effect, we may be mature, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

St. Irenaeus stated that "the Glory of God is a human being fully alive."

This is another reminder to challenge ourselves to embrace every situation with courage and awareness of God's capacities to transform suffering into new hope. Let's not numb ourselves or escape in fruitless despair, but let us do our best to be present to whatever challenge we face.

More importantly, let us pray for the grace to be able to do that.

*God is not only in control,
God is the destination and purpose.*



A SHARER IN

Redemptive Suffering

While some of our problems seem insignificant compared to the heavy crosses of death and disease, we need to remember that Jesus completely understands the smaller sorrows of life. From the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus looked upon people with divine compassion and with tender human empathy He learned from His Blessed Mother. At her plea, He spared a family from shame and embarrassment when they ran out of wine at their wedding feast. In my own life, I've suffered – from difficulties in childhood to health complications, including autoimmune diseases and fertility issues, everyday financial headaches, to watching loved ones pass on. At times, I felt like my sufferings were insignificant compared to that of Christ's sufferings. And at other times, I was consoled, knowing that my own hardship was an opportunity to draw near to the suffering Christ.

There is nothing we can suffer that Christ has not suffered before us. He was a refugee, carried to Egypt in His Mother's arms to escape King Herod. When He began His public life, He was rejected by the people among whom He had lived. He knew loneliness as He fasted in the desert, and grief when His friend Lazarus died. Jesus took Peter, James, and John into the Garden of Gethsemane to be with Him in the moment of His deepest spiritual anguish; instead of keeping vigil, they fell asleep, and later one of His disciples betrayed Him. The ultimate physical agony was only part of the Passion of Christ. He was subjected to ridicule and humiliation. Mocked and spat at, stripped naked before the crowd, and raised as an object of contempt and desolation. On the cross, He endured not only pain, thirst, and asphyxiation, but the insult and jeers of the crowd. It must have added immensely to His agony to know that His Mother stood and helplessly watched

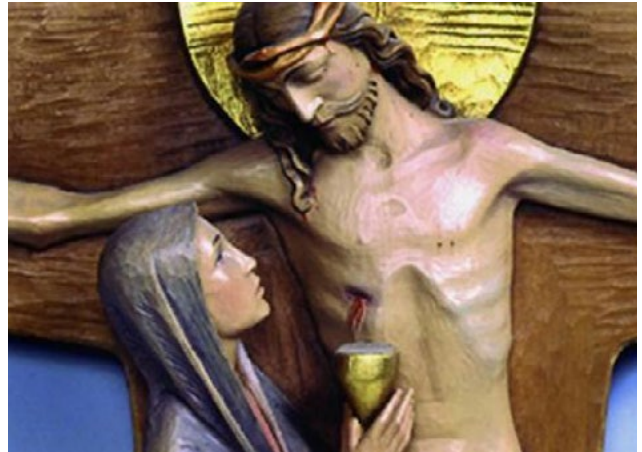
His ordeal, staying at the foot of the cross until He died. Even in His suffering, He thought of His mother, giving her into the care of St. John. Finally, He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

The certain comfort we can find in our pain and frustration is that Christ knows what we endure. If we are broken in body, so is Christ; if we are tortured in mind, so is Christ; if we are deserted by our closest friends, so is Christ. Even if it seems all hope is lost and that God no longer hears us, we know Christ is there amidst our abandonment, crying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" St. John Paul II said, "Each man in his suffering can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ." It is Christ who suffers in us if we allow Him to offer Himself to His Father through us. We can place our suffering on the altar of the Unblemished Lamb; we can participate intimately with Him in redeeming creation.

Though we could not walk with Him along the Way of the Cross, or be with Him in Calvary, we can alleviate the sufferings of Christ in His brothers and sisters. We need to become sharers in Christ's Passion not only by offering our own suffering, but by extending ourselves in love to Christ's suffering in others. We can wipe His face, as Veronica did, by comforting the sick, or take His cross, like Simon the Cyrene did, by listening to those who need our company and friendship in times of hardship and pain. We can raise the fallen Christ when His strength fails in the aged, the weak, and the sinner. We can plead for His life in the unborn, the handicapped, and the vulnerable. Learning to suffer is an art and a prayer. One needs patience, practice, and perseverance. When we think we have reached our limit of endurance, and when we are weakest, God

is most powerful in us. The most heroic act in history, the redemption of humanity, took place when Christ was stretched powerless upon the cross.

As we continue to offer our suffering to the Father, we become one with Christ crucified. As we care for our neighbours who suffer, we become agents of healing and comfort; we become one with Christ, the Healer and Lover. Through doing this, we can be assured that having shared in His Passion in our own lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters, we will rise with Him and share forever in the glory of the Resurrection.



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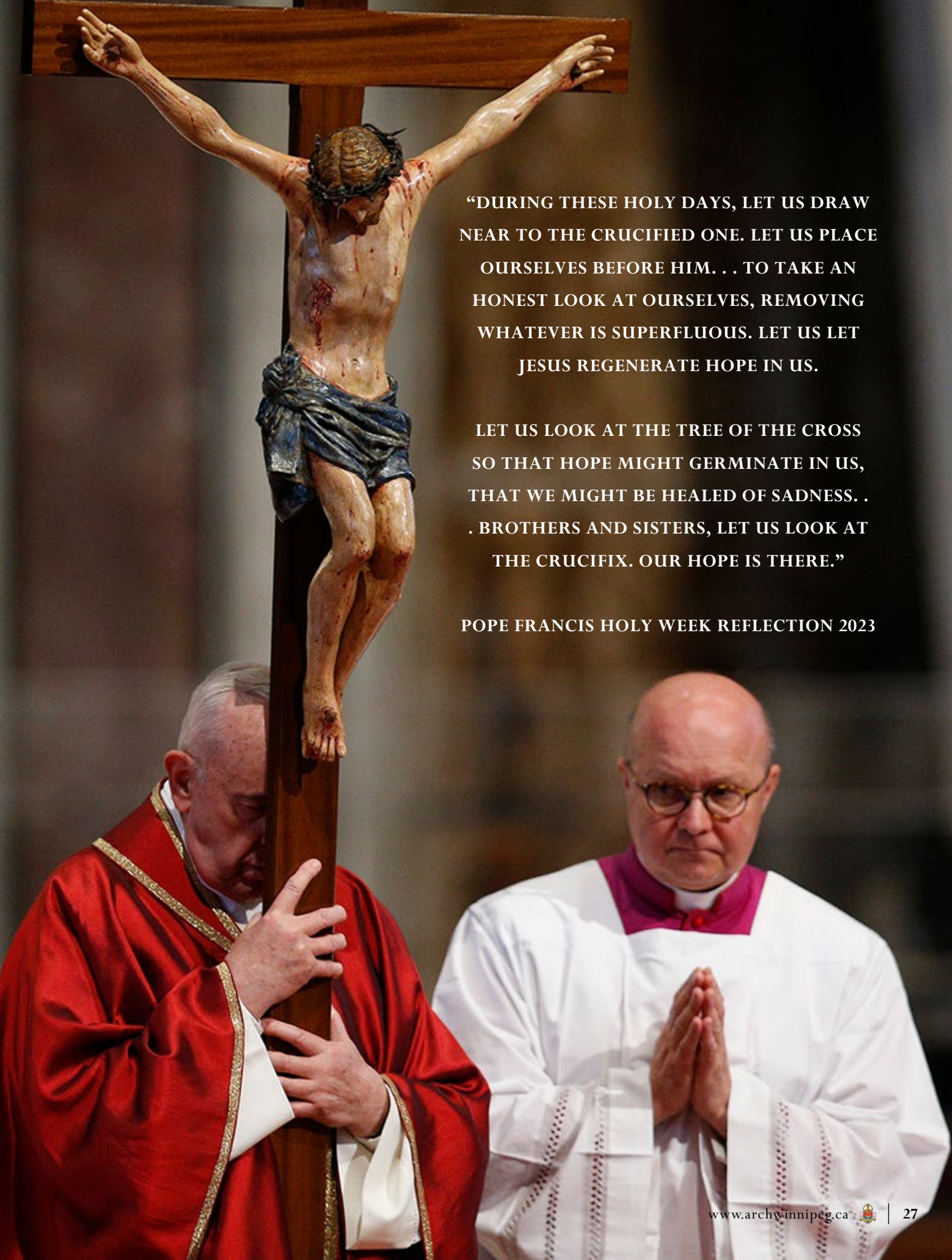
REDEMPTION'S PATH:

Finding Healing and Love Through Friendship with God



I've recently experienced a rift with a friend. It made me question the essence of love, and its purpose in our lives. Throughout the breakdown of the friendship, I grappled with unforgiveness and bitterness. However, I never imagined the substantial healing and growth God would bring as I allowed myself to release and move forward over time. Firstly, and most importantly, I realized that this journey involved relying on God; I couldn't navigate it alone. Throughout the waiting period, and while I tried to understand and come to terms with the situation, I drew closer to love, recognizing it as God's very essence. It's important for me to note that there were days that were more challenging, where I would find myself slipping back into that painful state, questioning why this had to happen to me. Ultimately, I came to understand that, by encountering what lacked love, I could fully recognize and cherish authentic love, which is God. The journey to healing has been very challenging; there were many moments of tears, and despite the time that has passed, those tears sometimes resurface.

Yet, I have learned that the path to redemption isn't always a straight line; we will fall and slip, but it doesn't mean we're not progressing. Throughout the ups and downs, the journey remains slow and steady. I've learned that what matters is not the path itself, but the One guiding us through it all: God. I found my identity in Him, knowing that His love is everything I need; it completes me, and nothing can remove or change that. I know that even in moments when it feels like I have "nothing," in Him, I have everything, and that's all that matters.



“DURING THESE HOLY DAYS, LET US DRAW
NEAR TO THE CRUCIFIED ONE. LET US PLACE
OURSELVES BEFORE HIM. . . TO TAKE AN
HONEST LOOK AT OURSELVES, REMOVING
WHATEVER IS SUPERFLUOUS. LET US LET
JESUS REGENERATE HOPE IN US.

LET US LOOK AT THE TREE OF THE CROSS
SO THAT HOPE MIGHT GERMINATE IN US,
THAT WE MIGHT BE HEALED OF SADNESS. .
. BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LET US LOOK AT
THE CRUCIFIX. OUR HOPE IS THERE.”

POPE FRANCIS HOLY WEEK REFLECTION 2023



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