



Sisters of Providence
of St. Vincent de Paul
www.providence.ca

PROVIDENCE PAGES

Summer 2017



Congratulations Jubilarians for over 370 years of combined religious life!

Left to right: Sister Kay Morrell (60 years), Sister Karen Bennett (50 years), Sister Elaine Jacob (70 years), Sister Catherine Cannon (60 years), Sister Anne Hudec (70 years), and Sister Lucy Kearney (60 years).

story on page 3

In this issue:



Worship areas at new hospital



Ministry work in Peru



Working with at-risk students

Vision Statement

A world where the vulnerable experience compassion, justice and peace.

Mission Statement

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul are a congregation of vowed women religious called to be channels of God's Providence.

Rooted in the mission of Jesus, we empower the vulnerable through compassionate service, advocacy and networking. Sharing our spiritual, human and financial resources, we promote justice and peace for all creation.



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Special thanks to proofreaders
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A regular publication of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul



Religious life is a pilgrimage not just a journey

Celebration of this year's Jubilarians started by acknowledging a contribution in their honour to a northern community in need (*see back page for more*), followed by Sister Sandra Shannon's address:

Life has been described as a journey. It is a good metaphor. I've used it myself to explain what has happened to me in the past and what changes might happen to me in the future.

Today, though, I want to view the Religious Life of these six women not as a journey but as a pilgrimage. There is a difference. We are born into the journey of life with no say about it. However, we choose to begin the pilgrimage of religious life, usually from some inner feeling or sense of call from God.

Anne, Elaine, Catherine, Kay, Lucy and Karen, 70, 60, 50 years ago, you voluntarily began your pilgrimage through religious life.

Their first task was to prepare for this adventure. They bought provisions and gear. Remember the list sent from the Motherhouse? Then they had to travel, for some a long journey, for others a short one, to this strange land called the congregation. Here is where the pilgrimage really began. This land had its own language, e.g. mistress, grand silence, wet mop, dry mop, collation, congé,

outside sleeves, etc. The people in this strange land, well, they all dressed the same.

A pilgrimage, deliberately chosen, is done for a purpose, or goal. What might that purpose have been for these six women? I think they had a threefold purpose/goal:

1. *To come to know and love God more deeply*
2. *To come to know themselves more clearly*
3. *To serve the poor in yet some unknown way*

On a pilgrimage, the mode of transportation is walking. It was so with these women. They walked new terrain in this religious life in the early years called novitiate and temporary profession. They saw new vistas, learned a profession or honed the one they had. They learned prayers, the meaning of silence, how to pray, how to walk with others. Each year their pilgrimage brought them to small streams called retreats. Here they rested from their walking, found refreshment, and drew closer to their purpose, their goal of closeness to God. On the road again, they would see the far hills, and beautiful sunsets and know LOVE awaited them there as well, as clarity of self and mission.

Occasionally, the going was rough and the countryside unknown. Muscles were strained.

Falling down was an occasional occurrence. However, always THE ONE whom they had come to know and for whom they continued their pilgrimage, lifted them up and set them on their way again.

Pilgrimages usually involve suffering. For those on the



pilgrimage through religious life to discover God and self, the suffering can be loneliness. Why? Because only God can fill the void within. Yes, for our group of six there was loneliness but never aloneness. Their Lover always made sure others were there on the same pilgrimage. They were called community members.

The way forward often took many twists and turns brought about by life circumstances. Perhaps it was a change in ministry that opened up a whole new way of being. Perhaps it was illness that changed the route they walked.

The one certainty of a pilgrimage is - the experience itself shapes us. Anne, Elaine, Catherine, Kay, Lucy and Karen are who they are today because they have faithfully walked the religious life road for 70, 60, 50 years.

Have they finished their pilgrimage? Have they reached their goal? – Not yet! It will only be over when their goal of being one with their God has finally been accomplished, when they find their true self and when the poor they came to serve are poor no more.

I wish each of you strength, hope and blessings for the pilgrimage that is yet to continue and I express the gratitude of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul for your choosing to share your pilgrimage with us.



A Time to Remember

An excerpt from Sister Lucy Kearney's response on behalf of the Jubilarians

Jubilees are times to remember, to give thanks for what has been up until this moment, and to prepare ourselves for the unknown future.

Thanks to our General Superiors and leadership teams we were challenged to grow, given opportunities to study, to recognize and adjust to the needs of the time whether in healthcare, educational field, social work, spiritual or pastoral ministries. At each stage, we experienced a "Letting Go", both as individuals and as a Congregation.

Upon reflecting on letting go and planning for the future two quotes from former General Superiors always surface. Firstly, Sister Irene Forrester reminded us that good stewardship demands that we plan well for future sponsorship whether in our hands or those of some Catholic organization; secondly that of Sister Joan Whittingham when she said "Letting go of what was, is painful and needs





to be grieved. At the same time, I invite us all to recognize the potential for responding to the needs in our time as our pioneer sisters did in theirs, by embracing our moment in history to ensure the continuance of the healing ministry of Jesus”.

Fast forward to the present. Sandra, Frances, Gayle, Diane you have relentlessly collaborated with others to plan that we Sisters of Providence will leave a legacy whereby our mission to work toward a world, where the vulnerable will experience compassion, justice and peace, will continue. Ever sensitive to the reality experienced by aging, uncertainty, accepting that we may be no longer in control, but believing that we are called to be channels of God’s Providence, you arrange processes to bring us to a place of peace. Your encouragement, your positive trust in the future, and your prayerfulness are most obvious and appreciated. Thank You.

I conclude with the words of St. Paul to the Philippians: “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion”.

We Jubilarians say, “We thank God every time we remember you, constantly praying with joy in our hearts for all of you. We are confident in this, that the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.”

Lives That Flow Like a Stream

An excerpt from Friar Ed Debono’s homily at Saturday’s celebration Mass

Your varied lives flow like streams from the Rocky Mountains. They flowed down from different paths, at different rates, in different ways and all in conformity with nature. Routes that had to be considered and a drive that was personal, strong and purpose filled. Without knowing what you would encounter along the way, rocks, roots, and refreshing pools, you kept moving, going somewhere, to converge at a common destination.

For it was the theme of your lives that empowered you to choose different paths, different objectives, different means, to reach the same objective. There was a basic drive,



unclear initially, but as you journeyed you wondered: What am I here for? What does the Creator want me to do?”

The spark you had in your hearts when you entered is still there. It is like that stream of water that still flows and gives refreshment to others.

Keep that sparkle in your eyes and hearts as you deepen your spiritual life with the help of the Holy Spirit and may the Holy Spirit help you to keep on celebrating the joy of who you are.

Congratulations to all the Jubilarians from your own community, the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph. Congratulations also from the Franciscan Friars and the Archdiocese of Kingston.



Legacy gift honours Sisters in education

In the words of Sister Sandra Shannon, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul have strong connections to teaching.

“We have all been involved in education of one sort or another,” Sister Sandra explained at a congregational meeting and announcement earlier this year. She shared examples, such as leading wellness activities, working with Associates or on Mission initiatives, participating in liturgy, and teaching at the Spirituality Centre or in a classroom in schools, etc.

“As a Leadership Team, we have been reflecting on how to honour the many contributions Sisters of Providence have made over the years in the field of education,” Sister Sandra said. “You never know what you’re going to hear when the phone rings... and Providence provided again!”

Last summer, a call came to the Motherhouse from Brother Lenny Rego, who had worked with the Sisters of Providence in Peru. Brother Rego is now the Resident Oblate at St. Paul’s University in Ottawa, and he

was telephoning to ask if the Sisters would consider making a gift to the University’s capital (building) campaign.

“Brother Lenny explained his experience of the Sisters of Providence was that we were living transformative spirituality in Peru, and that is why he reached out to us,” said Sister Gayle Desarmia.

After careful consideration the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul responded favourably to the request, and endowed \$2.5 million to St. Paul’s to support education.

At a ceremony in Ottawa in April, the University took time to thank and honour the Sisters of Providence for this legacy gift.

“I wish to offer my sincerest thanks for your friendship, faith and hope for the world as we work together to prepare the next generation of leaders for our world,” said Chantal Beauvais, Rector of St. Paul’s University.

The money will be used to fund a new school within St. Paul’s, called the ‘Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.’ The school will be the first of



From left to right: Manal Guirguis-Younger (Dean Faculties of Human Sciences and Philosophy), Sister Fatima r.s.m., Sister Miriam K. Martin r.s.m. (Associate Professor, Director of the School of Transformative Leadership), Sister Sandra Shannon, SP (General Superior, Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul), Chantal Beauvais (Rector), The Honourable Catherine McKenna MP and Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Soeur Rachelle Watier, SCO (General Animator, Sisters of Charity of Ottawa).



Positive interfaith dialogue important

Annual conference emphasizes importance of positive interfaith dialogue in spiritual practice

One common trait among spiritual directors is their ability to listen deeply – one might say, beyond words. This special gift allows them to have truly authentic conversations with those they are supporting because they know inherently that we are all connected and that spirit is moving in all of our lives.

Whether we are rooted in the Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish or Islamic faith, we have an opportunity to learn from one another and to work together to heal our personal and planetary problems. This is the message that

both Sisters Jeannette Filthaut and Diane Brennen took home after attending this year's Spiritual Directors International Conference in April.

The event, which was themed “Seeking Connection,” returned to Toronto for the first time since 2003. The main highlight for the two Sisters was the conference's plenary presenters – the Interfaith Amigos – who brought a unique blend of spiritual wisdom and humor to the audience to help promote effective collaboration on the critical issues facing our time.

Pastor Don Mackenzie, Rabbi Ted Falcon and Imam Jamal Rahman started working together

“Legacy gift” continued
its kind in Canada.

“When we are at our best... we are attentive toward where we are being called, to what is emerging. We are community and we come from a shared wisdom... We are partners. We do what we're meant to do for the life of the world,” said Dr. Miriam Martin, Director of the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality.

Transformative Leadership focuses on personal and social transformation, characterized by relationships that are ethical, inspirational,



intellectually stimulating and personal. It respects individual and organizational goals, welcomes change

for the good of people and communities, and encourages a continuous learning process.

■ Jenn Goodwin



Interfaith is about completion not conversion

after 9/11 when they saw that there was a dire need for creating more positive interfaith dialogue to help combat the demonization of entire religions based on the radical acts of only a few. After a short time working together, the Amigos soon recognized that the spiritual resources within each of their traditions had elements that were being used to support exclusivity, which too often lead to violence in the name of religion. They then got to work on developing tools to build supportive interfaith dialogue and are traveling the world promoting understanding, compassion and friendship.

“In our violent world where people are so disrespectful of different faith groups and races, it was empowering to see the relationships between these three men,” explained Sister Jeannette. “The dialogue between them was at such a deep level that it made you think about what was possible in the world.”

The Interfaith Amigos have made it their mission to help impart the core teachings of each of their religions to others around the world. They also stress the need to be open to interfaith dialogue and the wisdom of other traditions. They explain that interfaith is not about conversion but about completion – that by being open to other traditions, you can actually deepen your roots within your own traditions. They compare interfaith dialogue

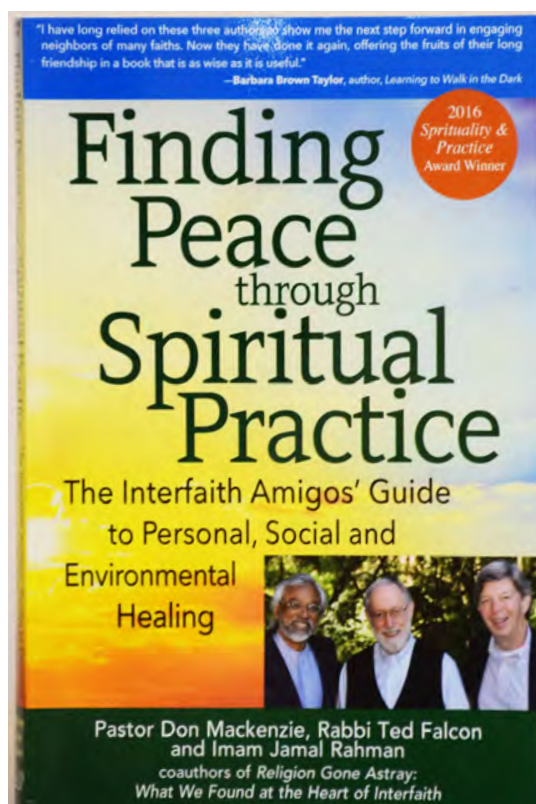
to looking at an object from different angles so that you can get a clearer view.

“Because of the keynote speakers, it really felt like a retreat rather than a conference. I found it extremely nourishing spiritually,” said Sister Diane. “We really are all the same and we all want the same things out of life no matter what path or religious tradition we follow. As spiritual directors, we are trying to guide others from different religions and there are means of doing that without referring to our own belief systems.”

Both Sister Jeannette and Diane were so enriched by the Interfaith Amigos

workshops that they took home copies of the book, *Finding Peace through Spiritual Practice: The Interfaith Amigos' Guide to Personal, Social and Environmental Healing*. The Sisters both say they are enjoying the book and that it is teaching them how to connect with the three religions by continuing their own individual spiritual practices. They feel the conference was a great experience for both of them and that, what they learned at the event, will definitely help them in their roles as spiritual directors.

■ Krista Johnston



Worship spaces at Providence Care Hospital

The wide-open glass doors of the Worship Centre in the new Providence Care Hospital beckon all to come in. As people enter the space for the first time and take in the view of Lake Ontario, the outdoor labyrinth and the gardens, many are heard saying, "Oh wow, this is so peaceful!"

At the heart of the hospital is a sanctuary where any person can feel welcomed to pray, meditate or just simply "be". Water, reminding us of the origins of life and our baptism flows down one of the walls, offering a cleansing and renewing presence. The inspiration for the curved wall and the flowing water came to the architects when they visited the Chapel of Mary Mother of Compassion at Providence Motherhouse. We can always feel affinity to our Founders through the architectural design in the Worship Centre.

The Adoration Chapel is set apart at the front of the Worship Centre so those who wish to pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament can experience the healing and peace for which they long. The

weekly Rosary group uses this space as they pray together.

The design of the feature wall at the front of the sanctuary was inspired by the South Wall in the Roman Catholic



Neil Elford

Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut de Ronchamp, France, which is one of the finest examples of the architecture of Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier. The labyrinth in the floor of

the Worship Centre replicates the world famous labyrinth in the Cathedral in Notre Dame de Chartres. The door to the outside deck enables those who wish to have prayers and then draw their last breath to do so out in God's creation.

Public hospitals in Canada serve an increasingly diverse population. Down the hall from the Worship Centre is the Meditation Room, designed for more intimate

prayers and meditation. Daily prayers by people of the Muslim faith can be oriented by the Qibla on the wall. The cardinal directions marked on the floor and the walls enable Indigenous persons to honor the four directions as they pray in their traditional ways. Staff and physicians use the space for meditation and other forms of prayer, enabling them to be centered in their service to those persons seeking healing at Providence Care Hospital.

Providence Care Hospital provides sacred spaces and respectful relationships so that all persons, regardless of the nature of their beliefs, can honor and draw upon their spiritual practices to provide them with the spiritual resilience and strength they require for their healing journey.

■ Neil Elford



'To build a home': The Sisters of Providence

The Archives is celebrating Canada's 150th birthday by reflecting on what life was like for the Sisters of Providence in 1867.

Mother Mary Edward, Catherine McKinley, was appointed General Superior, less than a year before, in September 1866 after the Sisters of Providence of Montreal returned home. While leading the fledgling community she was also in charge of the novitiate, and did not have any councillors to help her until the first elections in August 1869. No wonder she suffered from serious ill health in the first half of 1867.

There were seven professed sisters and four postulants in the community on July 1st, 1867. These pioneers were integral to the development and growth of the congregation. Of these eleven women, three went on to serve as General Superior; six to serve as First Assistant to the General Superior, five to serve as other Councillors, four to serve as General Treasurer, one to serve as General Secretary,

and three to serve as Mistress of Novices. All of the women, but one, were under the age of thirty. Sister Mary Jane de Chantal was 34 years old and interestingly was a widow. She was one of only three widows ever to enter the congregation.

Three members of the small community were blood sisters. Originally from Wicklow, Ireland, they immigrated with their family to Quebec City. Sarah Byrne, known in religion as Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, entered the congregation in July 1864 and her two sisters Catherine and Ellen entered together in May 1867. Their mother visited the House of Providence in November 1867 for the reception ceremony of Catherine and Ellen. The annals record that she "spent some time with us and in leaving felt she had not three, but many beloved children for she became attached to the Sisters. This kindly feeling was mutual, for no one could look upon this warm hearted Irish woman without revering



Mother Mary Edward, Sister Mary Jane de Chantal, and Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart



at the time of Canada's confederation

that magnanimous soul, which strengthened her to part with her three loving daughters." Unfortunately all three sisters died young. Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart was the first member of the congregation to pass away,

dying in 1870, aged 30. Almost exactly a year later Sister Mary Francis Xavier (Catherine) died aged 26. Their sister, Sister Mary of Mount Carmel (Ellen), served in many leadership roles, including General Superior; however, she

died at the age of 46 in August 1892 having given 25 years of her life to the community.

In 1867 the Sisters were living in the original House of Providence at the corner of Montreal and Ordinance Streets. There were over 20 orphans living in the House of Providence at the time, as well as numerous elderly. The house was becoming so crowded that they had to turn away some orphans and seniors. In early 1867 they decided to build an addition to house the elderly and infirm. As recorded in the annals, "Destitute of financial resources, but strong and rich in dependence on Divine Providence... a resolution was taken: To build a home for the aged and infirm!"

Up to this point the Sisters had supported themselves and their charges by going on

collecting tours, begging for donations of funds and supplies, within the Diocese of Kingston. To raise funds for the new building, Mother Mary Edward and Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart went on a collecting tour in the United

States for the first time. The annals record the difficulties they encountered on their travels: "God watched over our dear Sisters in this first Mission of Charity among strangers, and raised up friends for them in their hour of need. Rev. Mother having been prostrated



House of Providence as it would have looked in 1867

with Quinsy while in Syracuse received from Mr. Dalton and his estimable wife, all kindness possible. Rev. Dr. O'Hara of St. Mary's Parish Syracuse, denounced them as imposters from his pulpit. Thus sickness, fatigues of the journey and opposition of the priests was their portion. Yet it was remembered that a mite was gathered for the "New House", and this encouragement made every suffering lighter." The Sisters successfully built their first addition to the House of Providence in 1871.

Since 1867, the congregation has founded and closed many missions, served in many different ministries, and continues to share the same charism of helping the vulnerable that the Sisters in 1867 held dear.

■ *Veronica Stienburg*



Marillac Mission helping those in need with

I feel privileged and blessed each time I have an opportunity to visit Peru. November 23, 2016 Sister Diane Brennen and I left Kingston for a two-week visit with the Sisters and Associates in Peru. Besides spending time with both the Sisters and Associates, we had the opportunity to see the Marillac Mission Fund at work.

The Sisters live in one of the barrios or young towns called El Progreso which is located in the larger municipality of Carabayllo in the hills north of Lima.

Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr's main area of ministry is in El Progreso. Sisters Gayle and Diane visited Sister Rose-Marie's mental health clinic. They were present the day the volunteers and clients were having a sale of jewellery and other small items which the clients had made during the regular Thursday afternoon workshops. The excitement of the clients and their pride in showcasing their handiwork was tangible in the room. At the end of the sale, there were refreshments and a time for socializing, both of which are important elements of their



Classes in Fray Martín

regular Thursday program.

Sister Sara Jiménez spends many hours working with the poor in “el campo”, in the countryside north of El Progreso. The people who live in that area mainly earn a living by farming and are among the very poor in Carabayllo.

One afternoon Sister Diane and I travelled north to Chocas where Providence Associate Fernanda Ramírez conducts a First Communion class. Another afternoon we were present for the catechism class in near-by Fray Martín. Sister Sara, assisted by Providence Associate Elsa Legúia, offers the catechism class in this pueblo.

The two Sundays we had the opportunity to attend Mass in chapels which had received assistance from the Marillac Mission Fund. The chapel in Villa Esperanza had received a special donation for the construction of the roof. The chapel in Fray Martín has a new look now that the exterior walls have a coat of bright blue paint. During their homilies the priests at each of the chapels praised the work of Sister Sara Jiménez among the poor and the financial assistance of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul through the Marillac Mission Fund.

Assistance to the poor often involves time spent counselling. Sister Rose-Marie



support from Associates in Peru

spends much of her time at the clinic in one-on-one meetings with those needing any kind of assistance: to access health and social services in the community, to receive financial assistance in paying for costly health services or costly medications, etc.

One concrete instance of assistance to the families in Fray Martín came in the form of used clothing. Sister Sara brought the box to the chapel in Fray Martín and the children in her catechism class were

each given a piece of clothing plus extra clothing to take home to their brothers and sisters.

The Providence Associates in Peru support the ministry of the Sisters and are actively involved in the assistance to the poor both individually and collectively. Each September they offer assistance collectively to a poor village in the countryside. Sister

Diane and I were present for their December meeting in which they reviewed and evaluated their year and made suggestions for their outreach activities in 2017. At the end of the meeting there was time for socializing and presentation of shawls to each of us. The shawls bear the handprints and names of the Peruvian Associates.



Presentation of shawls

While we were in Peru, Sister Sara's ministry in Our Lady of Guadalupe parish involved being responsible for a novena in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I was fortunate enough to accompany her to Torre Blanca one evening for the novena. The novena consisted of recitation of the rosary and Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion. It was wonderful to hear Sister Sara's homily on

"Who is Jesus?"

An important element of our visit to Peru was the opportunity to meet with the students sponsored by the Marillac Mission Fund. Some of the students visited individually and we met with others in groups. These students meet regularly to reflect on Scripture and

Christian values in daily living and what this means in their lives. It is very touching to hear their sharing on what matters in their lives each day.

The two weeks spent in Peru flew by all too

quickly. I felt that I would have been happy to spend a longer time there in order to better know the people. All in all, I truly felt privileged and blessed to be welcomed so warmly not only by the Sisters and Associates but also by all those with whom I had opportunity to interact. I look forward to my next opportunity to visit.

■ *Sister Gayle Desarmia*



Sister Monica Whalen's career in helping

Building student confidence and preserving Catholic education are top priorities for Sister Monica Whalen

Sister Monica Whalen has spent her career as an educator helping vulnerable and at-risk youth to reach their highest academic potential.

Since joining the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario 22 years ago, she has spent the majority of her time working directly with children coping with emotional and behavioural challenges, developmental disabilities and learning disabilities as both an educational assistant and student support worker.

Having spent time in both elementary and high schools in Carleton Place, Kemptville, Almonte, Perth, Smiths Falls, Westport and back to Carleton Place now working at St. Mary's School, Sister Monica has seen a great deal of change within the school system, including the use of various new technologies (smart boards rather than blackboards), the implementation of prevention programs (to help children build empathy, overcome grief and self-regulation) and new protocols for upholding school safety in the face of things like student abuse, threats and lockdowns.

"There is a lot of focus now too on mental health within the schools," Sister Monica explained, adding that she is involved in a board-wide resiliency program, which surveys the student population to help identify at-risk youth. The schools are then charged with

building their own mental-health teams to try and provide helpful interventions for their students.

"The principal, along with the mental health team, are encouraged to draft an annual profile and program to meet those students who have the highest needs," she explained. "For instance, if we know they are feeling isolated, we try to think of ways to connect that student with the school community to provide a sense of

belonging."

In her current role as an educational assistant in the Multiple Exceptionality Program at St. Mary's, Sister Monica is working alongside a group of sixteen Grade 4 to 6 students (five of which have autism) with subjects like reading, language and math in the morning. She then works with five Grade 6 students in the afternoon who need extra assistance with their regular classes, like French, which is a subject she admits, she may never get to master.

"I have never taken French in my life," she



Sister Monica helping one of her students



vulnerable and at-risk students

said with a laugh. “I just couldn’t believe I was sitting in French class helping these high-needs students. But the teacher and the kids have been delightful,” she added. “My career has never been boring.”

Together in Faith movement working to preserve Catholic education

Sister Monica is officially eligible to retire in January of 2018 but says she will finish out the school year in Carleton Place. She says she will continue to volunteer her time with students after her retirement but will also work towards preserving the Catholic school system, which is once again in jeopardy in Ontario.

In an effort to speak up for Catholic education, she says the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association is starting a campaign called Together in Faith to help preserve, protect and

proclaim the Catholic education system.

“There has been talk again about the two boards becoming one. Catholic education has been lost in several provinces already. I think people need to write their local MPP,” she stressed. “Children today have such a lack of knowledge, and experience of their faith. Unless there is Catholic schools encouraging students and promoting their faith, we won’t have it. When discussion of this topic surfaces, Sister Monica gets upset at the thought of losing Catholic schools because of the history of Catholic education and what the religious congregations of Canada have worked unceasingly to create. She would like to encourage the various congregations who are focusing on their legacy to give voice to this initiative.

■ *Krista Johnston*



For more information about the **Together in Faith** initiative and to send an online letter to your local MPP and express your reasons for supporting Catholic education, visit

www.togetherinfaith.ca



Return of heirloom seeds to indigenous

I was recently asked to participate in a working group called the Community Seed Network, which is a collective of seed savers from across North America who are engaged in sharing seeds rather than selling them.

All over North America people are getting together at seed libraries, seed swaps (like Seedy Saturday), seed banks and online through virtual initiatives to help each other save heirloom and landrace plant varieties as a public good. The Community Seed Network (born out of the Seed Savers Exchange in the U.S.) hopes to act as a resource and connector for these initiatives, so that we, the people, can freely share seeds with those who will steward them for the future.

Some of the participants in the network are from First Nations communities throughout North America, including a colleague from Tyendinaga who is a Haudenosaunee seed saver. This is important

because until now our indigenous people have been understandably wary of “sharing” seed varieties with us and have kept their more recent seed initiatives to themselves.



Let’s take a look at the history of the “Henderson Bush Lima” as an example. This lima bean is said to have been found growing in a ditch by a man named Peter Henderson who collected the seeds and then proceeded to sell them very successfully from his seed company. But we know that beans don’t grow by themselves because

they are exclusively cultivated plants and I certainly have never seen Henderson’s Bush Lima “volunteering” to grow on its own here in the garden, let alone in a ditch! Another possibility is that

Peter Henderson took that variety of lima bean from indigenous people growing it, renamed it after himself and sold it for profit, without acknowledging the work that went into perfecting the variety. It is impossible to know what really happened.

Thankfully there are now a couple of projects that are seeking to “rematriate” seed varieties by matching the food varieties we know by English names to the cultures who would have grown them before

Columbus’ arrival. Through this research, indigenous communities will once again have access to those heritage varieties and can once again enjoy foods from their ancestral diets.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat from Six Nations Grand River Territory says in Sacred Seed: “Plant seeds contain the story



communities that originally cultivated them

of creation, the spiritual law for the continuance of life, the natural law for relationship with the sun, winds, air, water, rains, microorganisms, minerals of the soil and other companion plants. To alter them is to disobey the laws of the Creator. Their integrity is the inherited legacy for the generations of the unborn. It is our duty to return the seeds to the coming generations in the same state as the seeds were gifted to us.”

We who steward the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary are in a perfect position to return seeds at this time, in the same state as the seeds were gifted to us. I am hopeful this network can help create a true sharing and gifting



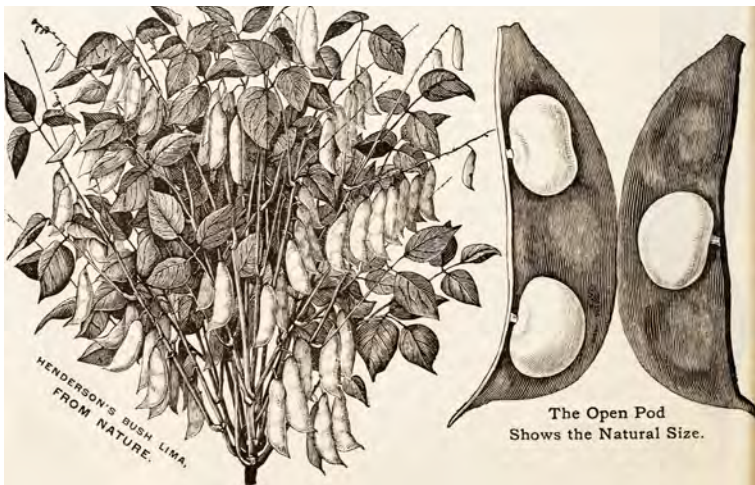
relationship amongst all of us who care about the seeds and that perhaps “rematriation” of some of our seed varieties can become part of our five-year succession plan for the Heirloom Seed Sanctuary collection.

Pope Francis stated to the UN General Assembly on Indigenous Peoples in 2014: “While international efforts towards the development of standards concerning the human rights of indigenous peoples are important, in many respects national and local policies are even more decisive in respecting

the specific identity and culture of indigenous peoples and in the protection of their rights. In this context, my delegation wishes to highlight the importance of just laws to regulate the relationship between indigenous peoples and extractive industries operating in ancestral lands: lands that, in many cases, are also of great cultural and environmental significance.”

Until very recently, the seed industry has been an “extractive” one taking and renaming varieties of seed for sale. Now we have the chance at our local level to respect the specific food identity and food culture of indigenous peoples and to give back from a heart-felt place of justice and peace.

■ Cate Henderson



By W. Atlee Burpee Company; Henry G. Gilbert Nursery and Seed Trade Catalog Collection [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons



Sister Julia Hamilton

Sister Julia Hamilton was born on January 20, 1922 on a farm at Elgin, Ontario, the third of six children of John Hamilton and Margaret Scanlan. After graduating from Notre Dame High School in Kingston, she attended Teachers' College and then taught all eight grades for the next four years in the rural school at Chaffey's Lock.

In August 1946 she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in Kingston. Her teaching ministry included assignments at St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Schools in Kingston, St. John's School, Arnprior and St. John's, Perth. She was also principal in most of these schools. She obtained her BA from the University of Ottawa and a High School Assistant's Certificate from the College of Education in Toronto.

After 24 years of teaching she answered a call to volunteer for the Latin American missions. She was chosen to go to Guatemala where she spent 37 years mostly in San Cristóbal, Totonicapán. Three of those years she spent in Momostenango, and two years in San Francisco el Alto. During her years in Guatemala she taught reading and writing to adults, conducted classes in catechetics in schools and parish, and helped in the formation of catechists and Eucharistic

Ministers. She also coordinated a committee of pastoral workers who attended to the needs of the most destitute. During one of her visits back in Canada she followed a Pastoral Care Course at St. Paul University in Ottawa which she found beneficial in her visits to the sick and aged.

Upon returning to the Motherhouse in 2004 she gradually adjusted to life here. She was assigned as assistant to the coordinator of her group and visited the sick until her health began to fail.

Sister Julia will be remembered as a woman of gentleness and kindness who loved life and gave life to others.

She was called home to her loving God on June 13, 2017 surrounded by family members and Sisters.

The Mass of Christian Burial, held in the Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, Providence Motherhouse on June 19, 2017, was presided over by Most Rev. Brendan M. O'Brien, Archbishop of Kingston. Friar Ed Debono, OFM Conv. delivered the homily. Burial was at St. Mary's Cemetery, Kingston, Ontario.

■ *Sister Barbara Thiffault*



Spiritual offerings this Fall

FALL SENIORS CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY SERIES:

Christian Spirituality in an Evolutionary World

Tue Sep 19 + Oct 5, 9:45am – 1pm
Dolores Hall
 Cost: \$20/session (includes lunch)
 Register 2 weeks in advance for meal count.

Senior or not, if you'd like to come you're welcome!

This series will explore some of the implications of the new cosmology for a renewed and hope-filled Christian spirituality. We will examine contemporary scientific insights and the Christian spiritual tradition in the present context of environmental concern and the invitation towards a new consciousness.

OVERNIGHT RETREAT: Freedom & Gratitude through Prayer

Fri Oct 6, 7pm – Sat Oct 7, 4pm
Deacon Bill Gervais
 Cost: \$75, Register by Fri Sep 22

Participants of this overnight retreat will be asked to consider their life experiences and spiritual journey through the perspective of the gospels, traditions of prayer and the Christian themes that are depicted through literature, film and cultural customs related to special holidays, such as Thanksgiving.

OCTOBER DIRECTED RETREAT
 Oct 18, 6:30pm – Oct 25, 1pm
Fr. Jim Casper, RSCJ, & PSC Team
 Cost: \$495 or \$75/day
 Register by Wed Oct 4

Fr. Jim Casper is a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. Theology, psychology and spirituality have

been the focus of his education. His assignments have included teaching, parish ministry, formation for religious life and retreat work. He currently resides at Sacred Heart House in Toronto.

SPIRITUALITY SERIES: Blessed are the Peacemakers: Practicing Non-Violence

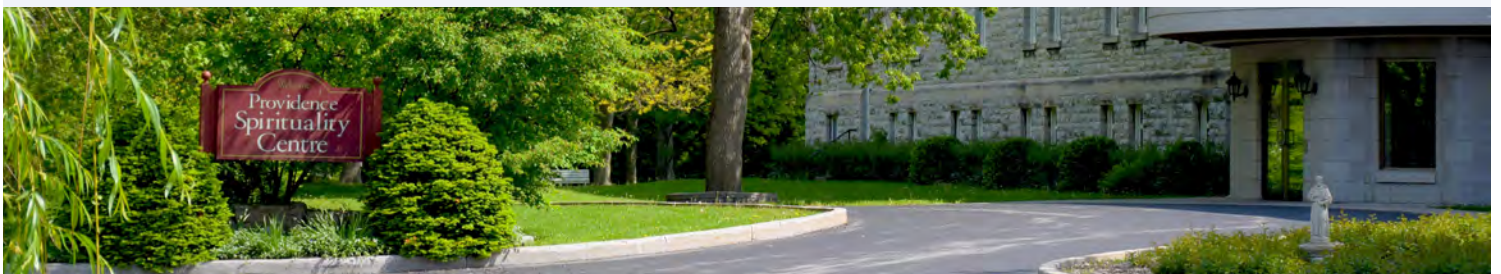
Oct 30, Nov 6, 13 6:30-8:30pm
Dolores Hall
 Cost: \$25/series, Register by Oct 16

This series will provide us with an opportunity to explore the Gospel invitation to peace in the context of a violent world. We will learn practical ways of non-violent thinking and acting and we will discover the simple path of compassion, forgiveness and peacefulness for ourselves and for our world.

ONCE UPON A COSMOS... Discovering and Nurturing Your Own Story within the Cosmic Story

Thu Nov 2, 7pm – Sat Nov 4, 1pm
Joyce Rouse - Earth Mama
 Cost \$135 (Retreat includes meals)
 Accommodation + Thu supper add \$100
 Call to pre-register with deposit ASAP.
 Full payment by Oct 5

Great stories begin with "Once Upon a Time". Our Big History story began almost 14 billion years ago and teaches us lessons in every discipline, including those profoundly spiritual. Come join us in deepening the journey through the Cosmic Story with contemplation, celebration, music and expressive arts. Whether this New Story is new to you, or you are a seasoned scholar, you will be welcome! Joyce Rouse, a native of the Iowa prairie holds a Master's Degree in Earth Literacy from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, in 2002.



Jubilarians gift to a northern community

This year Jubilee celebrants made a donation to the Norway House First Nation community where Sister Una Byrne is currently missioned. Sister Una sent an appreciation letter presented in part below:

What a wonderful surprise to hear that you had chosen our mission in Norway House First Nation, as the recipient of the community recognition of your jubilee! I personally, was really touched! The people were surprised and happy. They have good memories of the Sisters who lived and taught here for many years at the Residential School. Our present church is on the site of the Sisters' convent and I have heard many stories of "Sister Cook" who must have been a remarkable woman, as many seem to have gone to her for advice and consolation. They also speak of the good education the Sisters gave them. When I came, they asked if more Sisters would be coming back! So they remember Sisters as people who helped them! And now you come again to help them!

[We] discussed your proposed gift [and realized what] we needed were some hymn books for wakes, funerals and memorial services.



Sister Diane Brennen shows the card which accompanied the letter. The card features six women at the drum and a seventh figure above them.

With the poor health and social problems here, we have a lot of deaths. The people take death very seriously, and spend whole days and nights mourning their dead. The musicians keep these services going, often, all night. The music they know is not usually in our books, so we have been at a great disadvantage when we are conducting these services. And you have come to our rescue!

The people want me to thank you for your kindness, for thinking of them and helping them in this way. When they come to me for prayers for their sick and troubled family members I tell them how our Sisters are praying for them and they like that very much.

Congratulations, may God bless you all with joy and thanksgiving in the gift of your vocation.

■ *Sister Una and the Members of the Catholic Faith Community of Norway House Cree Nation*

