



ON GOOD SOIL

EVANGELIZATION &
CATECHESIS OF ADULTS

Winter 2016

Greetings from the Office for Evangelization & Catechesis

I have been profoundly moved by images of Pope Francis as he reaches out to acknowledge the vulnerable among us. This image speaks clearly to me about our call to be “merciful like the Father.”



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My nephew Christopher is a 26-year-old man living with cerebral palsy. The effects of CP have left him unable to speak but able to communicate with sign language and communication boards. It has left him unable to walk but able to get around in a wheelchair propelled by his parents, friends or care worker. It has left him unable to feed himself but able to take nourishment that is pureed and fed to him.

Christopher's life, his well-being, is dependent on the mercy of the Father, and he depends

each day on those around him to perform the corporal works of mercy in order that he might live fully the life he is called to live. Christopher has an abiding faith in God. He and his Gramma Catherine begin each day watching the Daily Catholic Mass and they regularly pray together. Christopher knows that God is with him. Celebrations such as Easter, Christmas and birthdays bring him great joy, especially when the entire family gathers together.

With all of his limitations, one would think that Christopher's quality of life must be minimal. The opposite is true. He lives a full active life each and every day. From the time he wakes in the morning he is accompanied by his parents, support workers, friends and family. His parents have made sure that his quality of life is excellent by their determination to help build meaningful and lasting relationships with others. He is a super-fan of the Peterborough Petes, the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Toronto Blue Jays. In fact, each year he goes with his parents to Dunedin, Florida, so that he can attend the pre-season games of the Toronto Blue Jays... he knows them and they know him.

Christopher has taught us a great deal about what is most important in life. Each year as we scramble to buy Christmas presents for one another, we are left wondering what Christopher would like. Perhaps a new outfit, a new country music CD, a new hat, new mitts, or a new coat would fit the bill. We have come to discover that the gifts he appreciates most are those that have significance or remind him of

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relationships. The family gathered together, a skipping rope, a photo of a family pet, a photo of his favourite aunt or cousin are the gifts that give him the greatest joy – simple but so meaningful.

Although Christopher has been the beneficiary of mercy shown to him by others, perhaps what is more significant is that Christopher models what I understand 'being merciful like the Father' to mean. His is a life of waiting. He waits for someone to get him out of bed in the morning, someone to bathe him, dress him and feed him. He waits for someone to drive him to his various activities. He demonstrates each day a patience that I will never possess.

There have been times when Christopher has encountered others who are less than understanding of his situation. For example, he has, on more than one occasion, been left at the side of the road while the city bus passes him by because the driver didn't want to create conflict by asking someone who was inappropriately taking space in the wheelchair section of the bus to move to make room for Christopher and his wheelchair. And so he waits for the next ride.

Psalm 40:1-3

*I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard
my cry.*

*He drew me up from the
desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.*

*He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.*

*Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the Lord.*

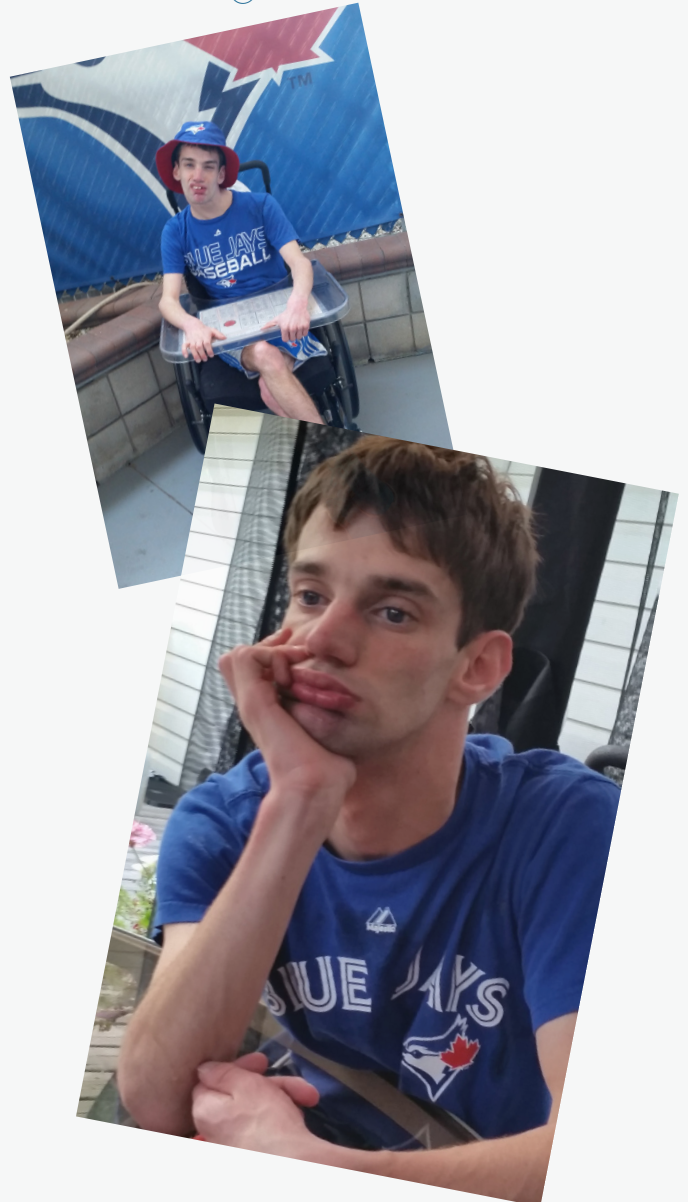
So often when I try to engage in a conversation with him I am unsure of what it is he is communicating and I have to say to him, "I'm sorry, Christopher, I don't know what you mean." He takes a deep breath,

rolls his eyes at me and then waits patiently until someone more competent than I can help to interpret the conversation. Christopher's reaction in these situations is not to lash out in anger or frustration. Rather, he projects a calm demeanour that says, "I get it, you just don't understand. I'll help you." It is a reaction that disarms us and leaves us aware that we are being given an opportunity to grow.

During this Year of Mercy, may we encounter in one another compassion, love, forgiveness and the grace of God's mercy, and may we wait patiently for the Lord so that we may sing a new song of praise.

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AN AFFORDABLE YEAR OF MERCY RESOURCE:

PSALMS OF MERCY BY DAVID DAYLER

LIVING WITH CHRIST SERIES, NOVALIS PUBLISHING (2015)

In his announcement of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis calls us to encounter the tender mercy of God. In this small booklet I have attempted to show how we can experience God's abundant mercy through prayer and reflection on eight psalms of mercy. This prayerful meditation guides readers through some of the most beloved psalms and helps them to tangibly experience the mercy of God in their lives. The question following each reflection allows the reader to personalize the moment and explore how the psalm is speaking to them in their lives today.

In his beautiful document proclaiming the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis tells us,

... we need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness. (*Misericordiae Vultus*, no. 2)

It has been said that the Psalms are the prayerbook of the Bible. They are a beautiful collection of poetic hymns that have been used in worship from the earliest days of ancient Israel up to our present-day liturgies. The content of these poetic hymns spans a wide range of human emotions, from the heights of joy and exultation to the depths of anger and sorrow. There is tremendous relevance to be found in these ancient writings for us today. We have but to unpack them within the context of our lives today to see the meaning unfold. The range of human emotions found in these texts all looks toward and leads up to

God. They remind us that in our humanity we are all an integral part of the people of God.

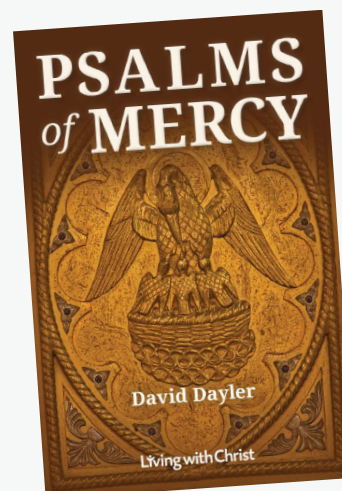
In the Psalms, then, we can find words to express all our human emotions and struggles. They supply for us a language that allows us to connect with God at whatever stage we are at within the human condition.

It is my hope that by using this resource for prayerful meditation during Adoration, as a springboard for longer conversations in small groups, or as a private resource for personal prayer, readers might gain insight into the power of God's mercy in their daily lives.

As we enter into our reflections on mercy as found in the Psalms, let us do so with open hearts and minds, ready and willing to use these hymns as doorways for enriching and building our personal encounter with Christ.

Novalis has kept this resource eminently affordable for parishes, including bulk discounts for larger purchases. If you are looking for a cost-effective give-away for your parishes, groups or individuals, I suggest you look at this little book as a possible resource.

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For more information, please click [here](#)

THE YEAR OF MERCY: HOW DO WE BECOME LESS JUDGMENTAL AND MORE COMPASSIONATE?

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Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

This scripture passage from St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (1:3-5) is the foundation of our Year of Mercy and is featured on the home page of our website.

Our Parish Pastoral Council has been discerning how to celebrate this Year of Mercy in our faith community. At our meetings, we shared with one another what "mercy" meant for us personally. For many, mercy was to see others as God sees them – to be non-judgmental and compassionate, as well as to tear down our own barriers of prejudices and discriminations towards others. But how do we do that?

One meaningful and profound way to begin to tear down our prejudices and discriminations is to encounter another in the sharing of their own story. When we listen to others who have experienced life's struggles and crosses, which might be different from ours, we realize that the difference is not so different after all. We begin to relate to the core essence of what all of us desire – to love, to be loved, to belong, and to have meaning and purpose in our lives. We begin to realize that we all have hurts, pain, wounds, fears, resentments and anger that need healing, forgiveness and mercy. We need to take the time to listen to one another, putting aside any and all preconceived ideas or opinions and just listening!

Our Year of Mercy at St. Paul the Apostle Parish will be a year of listening to one another. We have contacted our local resources, organizations and associations to avail ourselves of presentations and workshops offered on various life issues and struggles. One night per month, the parish will host an evening of listening to others' stories: a person who has struggled with addiction and is in recovery; a person who lives with depression and anxiety and how they cope; a prison chaplain and an inmate; a social worker dealing with domestic abuse (why it happens and why people stay in such relationships); and a cancer survivor who now works in spiritual care in a hospital (on what and what not to say to people who are sick and suffering). These are just a few of our evening *listening sessions* aimed at helping us grow in our understanding and compassion of others' struggles and crosses.

We hope that through these sessions, 2016 will truly be a year of mercy for us and, with God's grace, will allow us to tear down our discriminations and prejudices towards others.

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ART OF JOY PROJECT 2015

BY MICHAEL JEFFRIES, ARCHDIOCESE OF MONCTON

The Diocesan Adult Faith Commission is a group composed primarily of lay members with an interest in adult faith formation. During the year 2015, the commission read and discussed Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. From that, we determined that 2015 would be designated the Year of Joy in our archdiocese, and we developed initiatives that reflect that decision. The Commission decided to put into action Pope Francis' words: "Every expression of true beauty ... draws us to [Jesus] with bonds of love" (EG, no. 167). From this grew the Art of Joy project.

After much planning, a call went out to local artists and craftspeople within our Catholic community to consider Pope Francis' call to proclaim Christ through the arts. Contributors were asked to consider four questions and develop an artistic expression of their response. The project brought forth five resulting expressions of joy through art. A central and secure storage space was arranged for the pieces. A series of community exhibitions was arranged at our local Catholic churches.

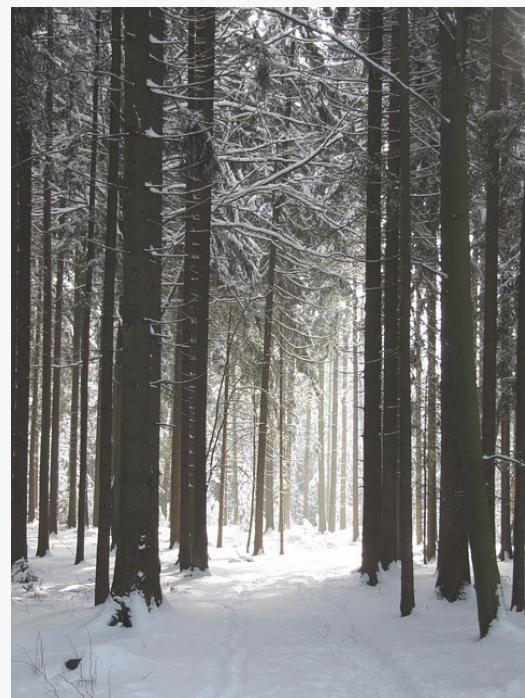
We received two quilted wall hangings, a watercolour painting, a stained glass and wood garden sculpture, and a wood ship with sea glass sails. Each artist was asked to also submit a statement explaining the concept for their submission. The artist's statement was placed next to the corresponding art piece for visitors to read.

For the most part, showings of the Art of Joy project submissions were coordinated with local Mass times, allowing time before and after Mass for viewings. Numbers of viewers seemed to swell as word of the travelling

project spread throughout our Catholic community. The art pieces were displayed to allow close contact and even physical touch. The accompanying artist's statements were closely read and added a deeper understanding of the artist's intention.

All of the submissions focused on the concept of Joy. One of the artists commented on his process for his project. His intention was to capture within the art piece individual expressions of joy and intentions for others. This was done by distributing 32 pieces of beach glass throughout the parish community and asking each person who received one to pray a prayer of intention over the glass and to return it with a piece of paper identifying where they found their personal joy. The artist tells us that the process resulted in his own reflection on joy and the reflections of the 32 people who received a piece of glass.

(cont'd on next page...)



Initially, the Commission was disappointed by the small number of resulting art projects. Upon further reflection, we concluded that the smaller number helped us with the logistics of getting the pieces around the community. As well, it was very clear that even with only five art pieces, the Art of Joy project met its goal of drawing our community to Jesus through expressions of true beauty. The project generated much discussion within the diocese and, we believe, a better appreciation of the joys available to us.

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“THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE CHURCH TO TAKE UP THE JOYFUL CALL TO MERCY ONCE MORE. IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO THE BASICS AND TO BEAR THE WEAKNESSES AND STRUGGLES OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. MERCY IS THE FORCE THAT REAWAKENS US TO NEW LIFE AND INSTILLS IN US THE COURAGE TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH HOPE.”

(Misericordiae Vultus, no. 10)



ADULT FAITH FORMATION IN CORNER BROOK AND LABRADOR

BY CATHERINE (KAY) JORDAN
DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOR EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

Ideally, faith formation with catechetical opportunities should be ongoing. However, we have come to realize that there are peak times of interest among our people. Lent seems to be prime time for participation, followed by the season of Advent and, for us, the month of May. We know this to be true as requests for programs, videos and ideas for adult faith formation are beginning to come in to the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis from the different parishes.

In Corner Brook, where the diocesan office is located, three series of faith formation sessions were offered. It takes time and resources to create sessions that offer a variety of content to fulfill the needs of different learning styles. The feedback and requests for more of the same makes it well worth the effort, however.

In 2015, during Lent, five sessions were offered on prayer. Unfortunately, bad weather interfered with this program.

In May, four sessions were offered on Mary.

- Just who is Mary and why do we honour her?
- Why is Mary called the Doorway?
- “Let it Be” – did Paul McCartney (Beatles) get it right?
- What IS Mary doing in heaven?

To create a springboard for thought and to facilitate discussion, the video *Mary* from the *Footprints of God Series* (Ignatius Press) and the booklet *Why Do We Honor Mary* from the *Growing Faith Project* (23rd Publications) were used. Each session began with a hymn or song that connected to the theme, and ended with the scriptural Rosary. Participants were given a copy of the scriptural Rosary for the mysteries said that evening, along with a card containing a prayer for Mary’s intercession based on the evening’s theme. For those who wanted to do further reading, references to the pertinent paragraphs of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* were provided.

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Last fall, in the six weeks before Christmas, a group gathered to study Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

- *On Care for Our Common Home: A Group Reading Guide to Pope Francis' Laudato Si'* (Bill Huebsch) was used to help facilitate discussion.
- Clips from *Cultivating and Caring for Creation* from greenspirittv.com were used. "This series was created to model a response to Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the environment and includes highlights from *Building a New Culture: Central Themes in Recent Church Teaching on the Environment* (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, January 2013). Bishop Donald Bolen, chair of the CCCB's Justice and Peace Commission, provided oversight assistance to the series, including writing and presenting its narratives." (greenspirittv.com)

This series was created for high school use with accompanying lesson plans, but the chosen video clips worked well as conversation starters with adults.

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“MERCY IS THE
VERY FOUNDATION
OF THE CHURCH’S
LIFE.”

(*Misericordiae Vultus*, no. 10)



ON THE BOOKSHELF

- *A Church on the Move: 52 Ways to Get Mission and Mercy in Motion* (Joe Paprocki)
- *Pastoral Resources for Living the Jubilee* – 8-book Set (distributed by Broughton's)
- *On Good Soil: Pastoral Planning for Evangelization and Catechesis with Adults* (CCCB)
- *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Sherry Weddell)
- *Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples* (Sherry Weddell)
- *Reimagining Faith Formation for the 21st Century: Engaging all Ages & Generations* (John Roberto)
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation* (John Roberto)
- *Disciples of All Nations* (Josephine Lombardi)

EMMAUS PRODUCTIONS

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YEAR OF MERCY VIDEO
RESOURCE FOR ADULTS

CHECK IT OUT **HERE!**

ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN CATHOLIC ADULT FORMATION (ACCAF) ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2016
HILTON GARDEN INN – OTTAWA AIRPORT
ON GOOD SOIL

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
THE SOIL | SISTER EILEEN DAVIS

FACILITATOR:
WORKING THE SOIL | ANNE WALSH

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:
WWW.CATHOLICADULTFORMATION.COM

HELPFUL LINKS

- On Good Soil
- CCCB
- CCCB Publications
- Association for Canadian Catholic Adult Formation (ACCAF)
- Vatican: The Holy See
- Divine Renovation
- Word on Fire
- Dynamic Catholic
- Lifelong Faith
- Novalis
- New Evangelization Summit - Ottawa, ON April 15-16, 2016

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