



Truth and Reconciliation

In the middle of November, for the first time, Manresa hosted the Truth and Reconciliation Group. She began, with dignity and solemnity, reciting a prayer which was both calming and challenging. She prayed in Ojibwa and English and explained the smudging and tobacco gift rituals.

We had participants from across Canada, from a deacon in British Columbia to a minister from Newfoundland. There were all different denominations: Presbyterian, United, Anglican and Catholic.

There were about 20 participants from the First Nations community. The elder, Shirley, (I could not spell her indigenous name), set an awesome and inspiring tone to the meeting. She was a lady open and generous with the spirit of God and a wonderful love for Mother Earth and a great respect for the gifts of nature. Personally, I found her more compelling to be responsible for the earth than some ecologists with their signs and banners. May we have many more like Elder Shirley.



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LOOKING FORWARD:

During Advent, Fr. Michael Coutts, S.J. will be presenting reflections, Tuesdays in Advent. All are invited. Free Will donation.

Christmas Eve: 24th December, we will have our Christmas Mass at 8:00 pm, beginning with Christmas Carols.

We have our Board of Director's meeting this week. As we approach it, we have completed one third the retreats of our current year. It is interesting to note that after 10 retreats, we have had 568 retreatants, and of these 105 were first timers, that is almost one in five.

It is an encouraging sign. However, the contributions have gone down on an average of about \$4 per person in these last 10 retreats. In only one of the ten, we surpassed the total amount of the same retreat last year. With the drop in the value of the loonie, our food bill has gone up. But I believe that our work is for the Greater Glory of God, and we will manage.

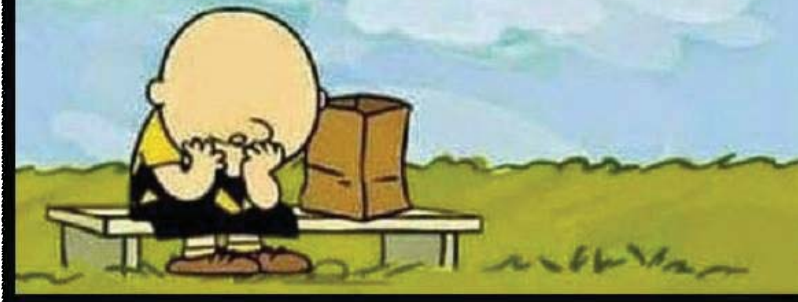


Deck the halls with.....

“One hundred more families, three million more dollars and an infinite well of compassion will be the Archdiocese of Toronto’s response to photos of three-year-old Alan Kurdi’s tiny, lifeless body lying on a Turkish beach.”

It is a pity a child has to die, before we are spurred into action. But that has been the story of humanity, and more so in our Christian Faith. A seed must fall into the ground and die, before we see the fruit. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, perhaps each of us can do something tangible to make sure there are no more stories like Alan Kurdi.

Sometimes I just want someone to hug me and say, "I understand your pain. It's going to be okay, here's a coffee and Two million dollars."



THERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT CAN'T BE ANSWERED BY GOOGLE

Sage things my mother told me, but not in rhyme

As we grow older, we slowly realize:

That wearing a \$300.00 or \$30.00 watch, they both tell the same time...

Whether we carry a \$300 or \$30.00 purse, the amount of money inside is the same.

Whether we drink a bottle of \$30 or \$3.00 wine, the effect is the same;

Whether the house we live in is 30 or 300 square metres, the loneliness is the same.

Whether you fly first or economy class, if the plane goes down, you go down with it...We're all here together.

True inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world, but rather from family and friends, with whom you chat, laugh, talk, sing songs and solve the world's problems at the dinner table

Monastic Life comes to Manresa Manor.



Every now and then, we get a special blessing at the Manor House at Manresa.

We received a request from the Redemptoris Mater Missionary Seminary, for a day of prayer in the Manor House. We were graced by the presence of Fr. Gregory and Seminarian Julian.



The little chapel, on the third floor just outside the director's bedroom, sounded like the dulcet voices that come from a monastery. The two Redemptoris Mater Missionaries were singing the office. First, the vespers on Thursday night and then the Morning Prayer on Friday morning. The mission statement of the Spirituality Centre says, Manresa is a place where people come to seek peace and consolation in prayer and silence. Truly our two Redemptoris Mater Missionaries brought that in its most crystalline form. Praise the Lord!

In the middle of all the sadness that came with the deaths of Br. Michael Leo Brady and Fr. John Egli O'Brien, two Jesuits both in their 90s, who died in the same week. We had sad moments paying our last respects to two venerable Jesuits both who passed on from the departure lounge of this life to the bright promise of immortality. Their wakes were held on November 11 and 12 respectively.

Holy Pandemonium



The Second Week of November found Manresa, anything but peaceful. First we had the usual school groups. The students from the various high schools in the Durham Area are full of life and activity. They are voracious eaters, but they have a abundant generosity of heart as well. They are the future of our church.

We had Denis O'Connor, All Saints, Brebeuf, St. Mary, Notre Dame, and Fr. Leo Austin Catholic High schools.

To balance the boisterousness of youth, we had the "Patres Graves" – or the heavyweights, - Jesuit Superiors from across Canada. They came to ponder the serious matters of apostolate and manpower coupled with lay collaboration and sundry items.



The week closed with 65 Teachers who came to spend their Faith Day which was scheduled to run from 10:00 - 3:00, The parking lot emptied later in the afternoon after a wonderful lunch prepared by our kitchen staff. The staff was there in full force, since we had 82 mouths to feed in total!

The following week 55 teachers from Neil McNeil High also had their faith day at Manresa. Their retreat was a renewing quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of a usual day.



Stale Fish

In the first week of October, Nada Conic presented talks for the first of three 12 Step retreats. She received the news, that salmon were swimming upstream to spawn. The low lying waters of Duffin's Creek were swarming with fish. We went down and were delighted to see huge salmon valiantly swimming. We took several pictures of the salmon, the pictures are now a bit stale, but the salmon were alive and fresh. This should have made the last "Occasional Newsletter" – but although stale fish are smelly, these photographs taken with a cellphone remember a delight.



Equally fresh, was **Fr. Fred Pellegrini**. He is the Rector of our Jesuit House on 83rd Street in Manhattan, New York. He is also the current vocations director who had visited Manresa earlier for a Vocations' Directors meeting. He impressed the Office Staff with his vivacity and showed an interest in giving retreats. Fiona and Louise cast the bait and he was hooked.

Instead of the film on Saturday night, Fr. Fred decided to have a "Hot-seat" session. It is very much like the late Fr. Jack O'Brien used to have during the Knights of Columbus meeting: "Ask the Chaplain".

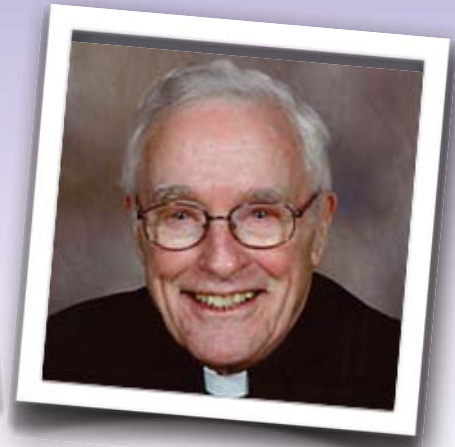
The Kitchen staff did us proud. As usual they are very serious about the retreat. They served roast beef on Saturday night. Needless to say it was entirely polished off the trays...

... Here is letter from one of the retreatants.

"Thank you for putting on a great retreat this past weekend (16-18th October) at Manresa. I attended with my brother and my father. We were all there for the first time. I'm emailing regarding your question about "a movie or the hot seat" for Saturday night. While I have not seen the movies or attended past retreats, I found the hot seat session extremely valuable for answering some questions I had and strengthening my faith in the Catholic Church. My father would concur that the hot seat session should be a part of next years retreat. Father Fred did an excellent job and I hope that he is back again next year"

from **Dominic Quinn**.

Fr. John O'Brien S.J



This is not an obituary column. Tons can be written about the achievements of Fr. Jack O'Brien from his accomplishments in Montreal in the field of communications at Concordia to his years in Rome in the same field.

At Manresa, last year we had nearly 2000 men and women retreatants, and nearly 2200 students come in for a Day of Reflection from the High Schools in the area. That is in one year! So you can figure out the 20,000+ men and women who encountered Fr. O'Brien during the two spells he had here as Director of Manresa.

Some of the retreatants had been coming for 30 years and more. Over that period they developed a personal relationship and friendship with Fr. Jack. The last verse of John's Gospel reads, "there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." Mutatio mutandis or correspondingly, if the accounts of all the experiences and encounters of retreatants with Fr. Jack were to

be written down, the whole of the Pickering Library would not have enough shelves to contain them. Of the many memories, two would be worth recounting.

IN Fr. John O'Brien's memory, an Automated Door (for people with mobility devices,) will be installed at Fleming Hall. Any donation towards the \$10,000 installation may be made to Manresa Spirituality Centre.

Thank You

First, Fr. Jack had a passionate devotion to create a peaceful and prayerful atmosphere at Manresa. He wanted to make it an oasis in the maelstrom of noise and activity. Manresa would be a place where women and men could encounter God and build a deeper and more intimate relationship with our Saviour.

Fr. Jack could not stress enough the need for SILENCE during the retreat. This was both an external and internal silence. Give a rest to your cellphones, your Wi-Fi, your iPads and Tablets.

The second important factor was to make the Manresa Spirituality Centre financially stable. He succeeded in handing over to his succeeding director on both occasions, an account book in the black. How he did it, will remain a mystery. He had a charming smile. He was not cynical, but a realist. He said to me, "to touch the hearts of our retreatants is our goal. But if we touch their pockets, it would be very helpful." – All for the Greater Glory of God.

Requiescat in pace