



Approaching Christmas

As the beautiful season of Advent unfolds and we move towards Christmas, the prophets especially Isaiah, Baruch and Zephaniah keep on urging us to throw off the robes of sadness and put on the robes of gladness because the Lord is near.

The Lord brings us tidings of great joy and peace to all on whom the favour of God shines. One can sense this actually happens in the words of Pope Francis: God loves us all and God loves us always.

When the late Fr. Jack O'Brien who was the Director of Manresa for two spells, was asked what would he like on his epitaph, he said, "here was a man who loved Jesus Christ." How true.

At Manresa, I have a sense that we are a staff that knows that "we are loved by Jesus Christ." That is the gift of Christmas

On the 10th December, the staff celebrated its Christmas staff party at the little Restaurant at the south-west corner of Liverpool and Kingston. It has changed name so often, that I cannot remember it now. It was touched with a tone of sadness, because Fr. Donald Beaudois died. Fr. Don lived at the Manor House for over a decade and the staff grew close to him over the years.

Our kitchen staff of Kim, Mary Rose, Olive, Doris, Roselle and Alana, our housekeepers, Eva-Maria and Marion, front office, Louise and Fiona, Fr. Hawkins and Sr. Karen, Br. Bob and Fr. Michael wish you all the blessings of Christ Child, with health and peace in the 2016.



**MANRESA SPIRITUALITY CENTRE
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Board of Directors.



Speaking of tidings of Good news, we have two new members who have joined us on the Board of Directors:

Kathy Demspey, a young old timer, is a vivacious red-head, (at least currently). If you remember Pigpen in Charlie Brown cartoons. He manages to shuffle off grime everywhere, Kathy manages to exude joy and “being alive” wherever she goes.

She has taken the 2½ year spiritual companionship course at Manresa. She has facilitated Twelve Step Retreats here at Manresa since 2003. A mother of 3 children, Kathy has been a full time Real Estate Agent in Toronto since 1986. She is devoted to the 12 steps and to helping alcoholics achieve sobriety.

The second is Jesuit seminarian, **John O'Brien**, who will be ordained in a couple of years. He is an accomplished musician, and helped us with the entire Holy Week Service in 2015, and has promised to be back in 2016.

It seems Manresa will always have a “John O'Brien” in one form or the other. Hopefully this O'Brien's name will help us to raise the \$7,000,000 needed to build the envisioned new Manresa Retreat House.

Retreats

As the Phoenix rises: With the deaths of so many Jesuit priests, we were afraid we would have no counselors and confessors for the 33 weekend retreats each year. However, Jesuits and other counselors have agreed to come to help out. Last week, like the Blue Jays, I felt we had four David Prices on the team: we had Basilian Fr. Bill Riegal, we had veteran Kathy Dempsey, former director for six years, Fr. Scott Lewis and Sr. Karen.

As the Coca Cola add would say, who could ask for anything more. In the previous week we had another veteran Nada Conic. The retreatants love them and feel comfortable with these counselors.

PHONEIX RISING



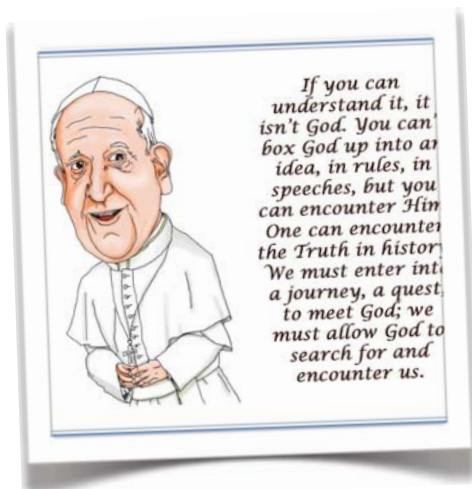
It is difficult to fill Retreat weekends in December because of the busyness of pre-Christmas parties and the excitement of shopping. As a result we have only two retreats: both 12 Step retreats. These retreats are usually full of life and enthusiasm. It is not a silent retreat – but they treasure their moments of silence. They have “Shushers” –

to ask those who talk when silence is to be observed – to move to one of the counselling rooms or walk outside. The retreatants take these admonitions in good spirit. The most common evaluation answer as to what they liked best on the retreat: “I liked the time of silence. It helped me to get in touch of some deep issues.”

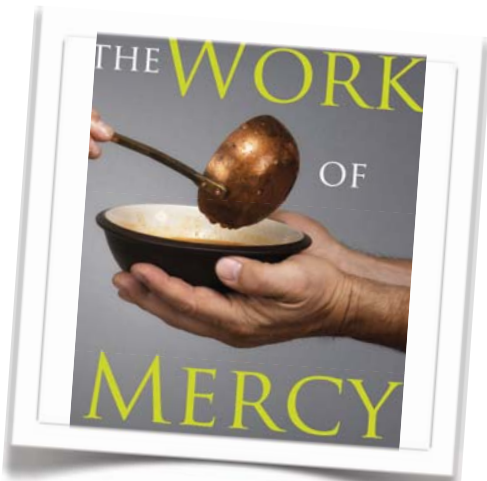


What in heaven is he up to?

Tuesdays in Advent



defining God



kindness adds more than salt



“walk thou in my footsteps”

Pope Francis inaugurated the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. It began on the feast of the Immaculate conception 8th December 2015. It extends to the feast of Christ the King, 20 November 2016.

Way back in 1300, the world was in a state of chaos because of plagues and wars. Pope Boniface 6th, inaugurated a Jubilee year of mercy. This was to ask forgiveness of sins and implore mercy from God. In 1350, Pope Clement 6th, decreed that there would be a Jubilee Year of Mercy every 50 years.

The Jubilee Year is based on Leviticus Ch. 25 vs. 8-15. After seven cycles of seven years, the 50th Year would be designated as a Jubilee Year. It would be proclaimed with the sound of a goat's horn (in Hebrew: Yobel) from whence comes the word Jubilee. It would be a year in which the fields lay fallow and the vines would be untended. There would be a year of rest and the slaves would be freed.

In order to celebrate this year of grace, Manresa offered a series of talks called “Tuesdays in Advent”.

In the first two weeks of Advent, we join with the rest of the Judeo-Christian Community in preparation for the Messiah coming in judgment at the end of time.

The last two weeks, we are immediate preparation mode of immediate Christmas celebration. Both comings involve a sense of waiting and excitement. The talks had elements of scripture, songs, stories and silent reflection.

Br. Bob estimates we had 70 attending each evening so far.