

NEW YEAR 2019

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR

Dear Friends:

You are receiving this in the early days of a new year. Fr. Henk van Meijel and the staff of Manresa wish you and your families a Happy New Year. May 2019 be blessed, safe and peaceful! The short reflection at the end of this newsletter deals with Epiphany. Perhaps that revelation of the beauty of Christ can motivate you in the opening weeks of this year.

ADVENT AT MANRESA

Just hours before Advent was to start, on the Saturday morning when there is no traffic and people are not crazily busy, 50 friends and benefactors of Manresa gathered to begin Advent in prayer with the Jesuits. They came not to a retreat nor to a program. They came to celebrate the first Advent Eucharist with the Jesuits and to share a festive breakfast with us. Each one received a vigil candle to take home and pray with each night during Advent for 2 minutes, noticing where and how they saw God happening that day. And they were also invited to pray with this candle for Pope Francis. The morning was magical and bounding with Advent joy.



NEWS LETTER NO. 21

TEAM-BUILDING FOR MANRESA STAFF

Fr. Henk sees it as very important to build on the cohesiveness of the hardworking staff here at Manresa. Just after he arrived in Pickering last summer, he initiated a weekly meeting of a few key staff. There are people from each area of responsibility – administration, bookkeeping, the kitchen, housekeeping, and maintenance. People take turns leading the opening prayer and there is a brief check-in. The main business of the meeting is a look back at the previous retreat, making sure that all is set for the upcoming retreat, and any discussing other significant business issues. All find it to be an important means of communication. Another team-building experience for the entire staff was a celebration over a festive dinner at a local restaurant in early December. By all reports, people had fun, good conversations, plenty of laughter, and good food.

CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATION



About ninety people gathered in St. Ignatius Chapel for a celebration of Christmas Mass on Christmas Eve. Fr. Michael Coutts said the Mass and gave an inspiring homily. Several of those who attended the Mass led us in a few traditional carols. After, Mass people were invited to enjoy a few treats.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE PROJECTS

Maintenance and grounds keeping projects continue to take place, usually between weekend retreats and other programs. Brother Bob takes care of most items, getting help from professionals when needed.

Fr. Henk lends a hand when he can. Most of the projects are minor, and you probably wouldn't even notice them – repairing cracks, leaks repaired, planting new trees, pruning other trees, window cleaning, repairs to a furnace, regular maintenance of other furnaces, cleaning of eaves troughs, plumbing issues, and others.



Retreatants would notice if things were in disrepair, so please let us know when you see something that's not working. Some projects, such as improved outdoor lighting, are in response to evaluations completed by retreatants. We do listen and take your suggestions very seriously. As well, we love your gifts! A retreatant offered the gift of a new LED TV. We installed it in the St Ignatius Chapel.

Bro. Bob and Fr. Henk continue to work on a list of needed work projects for next summer. Contact Fr. Henk if you or your family would like to contribute to the costs of repairs and maintenance. An obvious area where funds are needed is the repairs to the outside Stations of the Cross. This is a wonderful tribute to a living or deceased family member. Let us know if you have a skill or a gift that can help Manresa in our mission.

DIRECTED RETREATS

The Manresa program brochure for 2018 – 2019 includes three short paragraphs that are easily missed. They deal with the availability of
(a) individual directed or undirected retreats,
(b) ongoing spiritual direction and
(c) special programs

that can be booked by your group. The Manresa team has been strengthened and we have the staff to help with your spiritual needs. Let us know what we can help you with.

What is a directed retreat? A directed retreat provides you with individual spiritual direction. These retreats can be arranged during the week, when Manresa is quieter and less crowded than weekends. A spiritual director meets with you at least once a day, to guide you through a retreat experience tailored to your needs. There are regular meals and the opportunity for the Eucharist each day. This option has come to be appreciated by many regulars at Manresa.

What is ongoing spiritual direction? Most people who choose regular spiritual direction meet personally with their spiritual director on a monthly basis. It is one more element for a balanced approach to life.

COMING UP

There are still openings for some of the weekend retreats. Perhaps you have friends or family who could benefit from a time of retreat. Check out our website:

<http://www.manresa-canada.ca/retreatprograms/retreatschedule.shtml>

and take a look at upcoming retreats offered by Fr. Trevor Scott, Fr. John Sullivan, Fr. Scott Lewis, and others. People may be interested in Fr. Paul Robson's retreat focusing on Saint Kateri Tekakwitha in early March.

WINTER 2019 RETREAT

Space is available for the Winter retreat February 4-8, 2019. Fr. Doug McCarthy and Mary Bastedo, two retreat directors who are very much in demand, are offering it. Both have ample experience of working with L'Arche communities and the writings of Jean Vanier.

A THOUGHT ABOUT EPIPHANY

T.S. Eliot writes of being “no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation.” He says that toward the end of his famous Epiphany poem, *The Journey of the Magi*. Once we have encountered Christ, something must change in our lives. The old normal no longer works. We have seen the Christ and like the wise ones of old we can no longer go home by the familiar route. They were warned in a dream.

Our own warning may come from all kinds of sources, such as the memory of actual living persons whom we have encountered. Many people who make retreats experience a kind of epiphany. It may not necessarily be as earth shattering as the Magi finding the newborn Christ. But for people who have their eyes opened on a retreat, it can be manifested in being more peaceful, more loving, more gentle or having a new sense of how I can find God in my life. Each of us encounters Christ in ways that are unique to us. Isn't that earth shattering enough?



“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.” That’s how St. Matthew describes the wise men from the East and how they searched for the child who has been born king of the Jews. Their overwhelming joy came from the discovery of the child that they had searched for with intent. They knelt down and paid him homage.

The Magi searched by following a star. Others of us search in other ways, for instance, trusting in the mysterious unfolding trajectory of life, looking for patterns of God’s action in our lives. How will my discovery of the presence and power of Christ make a difference in my life this year?

FR. GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Fr. Gerard Manley Hopkins was an English Jesuit who lived from 1844-89 and is considered one of the leading Victorian poets. He has a poem that includes the line, “for Christ plays in ten thousand places.” The line reminds us of the fact that God’s



abiding presence is found in all things. St. Ignatius had a strong conviction that God is found in all things. Most of us have no difficulty finding God in the beauty of a fall day or a sunset. But, many retreatants are able to discover the presence of



Fr. Gerard Manley Hopkins

God’s healing love in some of the challenges and struggles of their life. It’s good for us to ask ourselves: Where do I spontaneously find God in my life? Are there difficult experiences where I need to allow God’s light to shine?