



The Eagle

Pentecost 2020

Dear Associates, Oblates and Friends,

What a strange time we are living in: a global pandemic which has affected everything we do. Social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands countless times every day and Zoom meetings have become normal parts of our everyday lives and we have no idea when this is going to end!



Sr. Elizabeth

Back in January, 2020 before the Coronavirus was identified as a pandemic, we had a couple of special events. The

first was our second joint meeting with the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius during the week of prayer for Christian Unity; Stephanie Martin spoke to us on the characteristics of Orthodox music and its influence on Healey Willan. Also in January the Sisters had a visit from the Rev. Lucy Reid's son, Ben, who told us about his pilgrimage from India to Scotland by motorbike stopping several times en route to assist people in a variety of ways such as helping refugees in a refugee camp to make small, very basic stoves.

In February we began a new practice of having a Retreat Day for all sisters on the first Monday of the month followed by a Grace Day on the Tuesday. There's a special feeling at the convent when we're all in retreat together.

Out in BC two events happened which had a major impact on St. John's House: Sr. Doreen had another angina attack and was in hospital for a week. Around the same time, I received a phone call from Bp. Logan McMenemy, Bishop of the Diocese of British Columbia, to tell us that the Diocese could

no longer provide financial support for the House in Victoria. As a result, we decided to close the House in June; Sr. Doreen returned to the convent in early March and is doing very well. It was decided that Sr. Brenda would go to St. John's House for six weeks and then Sr. Elizabeth Ann and members of the Novitiate would be in St. John's House from the end of March until sometime in June.

I flew to Victoria on March 12th for my annual visit, unaware that the Coronavirus had been declared a pandemic the day before! I was supposed to be there for two weeks and then visit our Associates in Winnipeg on the way home. We did manage to visit St. Barnabas Church on March 15th and admit Ralph Fram as an Associate. After that everything changed so rapidly that I decided to return home on March 19th. As I watched the news and tracked the pandemic both in Canada and worldwide, I realized we needed to close the BC House in March—not wait until June. So Srs. Brenda, Beryl and Wendy Grace worked extremely hard to pack up what we wanted to keep, give away what would be useful to others, and clean the house all before



Ralph Fram, after his Associate admission

the end of March. We appreciate so much all the help we received from Associates and Oblates in

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Letter from Sr. Elizabeth, continued from page 1

Victoria and Salt Spring Island, both before the sisters left and afterwards.

Life was changing so quickly that we seemed to be making new arrangements every other day. First, the Guest House closed; then we learned that we couldn't continue giving pastoral care at St. John's Rehab, so within a week we lost our three main ministries. We could no longer welcome priests to celebrate the Eucharist with us or volunteers to staff the reception desk or help in other ways. As of March 30th all the sisters were home, but those who had been in Victoria were in quarantine for two weeks which ended on Easter Monday.

When the bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario decided we should "fast" from the Eucharist, we decided to do the same even though we didn't need to as we are like a large family and Sr. Connie is a priest. Our only Eucharist in April was on the 15th, after Easter, and the first day all the



Sr. Brenda vacuums the Infirmary floor



Sr. Elizabeth at her re-installation as Reverend Mother

sisters could worship together. We decided to have a Eucharist on St. John's Day, May 6th, the day I was re-installed as Reverend Mother. Starting in June we began having the Eucharist on Sundays and major feast days.

For the last few months, the sisters have taken over the housecleaning, the refectory work, and the secretarial work after laying off some of our staff. In many ways we have become more Benedictine as sisters are now doing physical work. Some of

our staff are working from home including Dan, our organist. It is so strange to have no guests in the house, no retreats or quiet days, and no volunteers. **We miss you all and the life you bring to our Community.** Our bookroom is empty of books, cards, brochures and teddy bears and the Guest House is completely silent. Anyone who comes into the building including infirmary, kitchen and maintenance staff must go first to the screening station where their temperature is taken and certain questions are asked.

It's hard for us to maintain social distancing but we do our best. In chapel we have an empty chair and *prie dieu* between every two sisters; we sit two to a table in the refectory instead of four and each sister washes her hands in the refectory just before going up to the buffet. There are no communal serving implements. We have moved our Community Room to the Conference Room which allows for a little more distance between every two sisters. In June a team from North York General Hospital came to the convent to test us all for COVID-19. We were all "clean"!

We are all well and so fortunate to live in community. We continue to say the daily office four times a day and we are still singing in choir but we do miss you all and pray for you daily at the Eucharist or Mid-day Office.

With love and prayers for you all,
Sr. Elizabeth, SSJD
Reverend Mother

From the Fundraising Office

When we began to do fundraising following our move to Cummer Avenue in 2005, a prayer was written which we still use regularly in our Community. It was named the Lily Prayer and is shown here as originally prepared.

Friends, it's time yet again to send another "thank you" from SSJD

"for the caring hearts and generous spirits of all those who are moved to support our work in your name."

The response we received from the last appeal in *The Eagle* for ongoing support through pre-arranged monthly donations was heartwarming and encouraging. We

received a number of new monthly donors through PAR, also through PayPal. We are overwhelmed by your response to our suggestion and take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude.

Most of you are aware of the closing of St. John's House in Victoria BC as reported by the Reverend Mother in this issue of *The Eagle*.

- **To our donors who have directly supported the BC House, unless you specify otherwise, future donations will be used for the general operating funds of the Sisterhood, which provides the "bread and butter" of our community.**

We assure our associates, oblates and friends of SSJD of our prayer and concern during the past months with COVID-19 and the many restrictions that are keeping people apart. We express gratitude and appreciation for those who have continued their support during this time of additional expense, reduced income, and uncertainty. We remember the many people throughout the world affected by COVID-19 as they suffer loss of shelter, livelihood and basic necessities, and pray that they may receive support and compassion from "***caring hearts and generous spirits***".

GENEROUS AND LOVING GOD,
who clothes the field with lilies and sees every sparrow fall,
who calls to your service the Sisters of St. John the Divine:

Grant us the people, the talents and the funds we need
to carry out our ministry in faithful obedience to your will.

We give you thanks for the caring hearts and generous spirits
of all those who are moved to support our work in your name.

In trust we pray
to Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
AMEN.



The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, 233 Cummer Ave.
Toronto, ON M2M2E8



ATTENTION

We have created a new design for the donor envelope enclosed with *The Eagle*. The design is our own, using a regular envelope and a separate insert containing information similar to that on the current envelope. This makes your information and donations more secure. Look for it in the current and upcoming *Eagle* newsletters.

Our Memories and Ministry at St. John's House, BC



St. John's House, BC

One evening this May, the Sisters of St. John the Divine gathered at our regular evening community time to share memories of our years at St. John's House in the Diocese of British Columbia. It was amazing to discover that of the 25 sisters in the community, only three had not at some time either lived and worked, visited, filled in, or holidayed at St. John's House. As well as those present, three other sisters who have since died, and two others who have left for ministries elsewhere also contributed their time and talents at the house.

As Sr. Constance Joanna shared in one of her memories, "I remember so well Bishop Barry Jenks writing to me when I was the Reverend Mother and we had recently closed the house in Edmonton. He asked us to come to BC 'to be a praying presence in the diocese'. And what an adventure followed! Our enthusiasm was rewarded with fulfillment over the 18 years we were in the diocese, as the sisters reached out in loving partnership with the diocesan faith community and others across the diocese and beyond, and as they were welcomed so warmly by everyone in the diocese."

This adventure began in October of 2002, when Sisters Doreen and Valerie drove across Canada, and arrived at Queenswood House in Victoria, living first with the Catholic Sisters of St. Anne. In May of 2003, in a covenant relationship with the diocese, the sisters moved to the rectory of St. Peter's Lakehill Anglican Church, which became St. John's House, BC. We were joined by Sr. Margaret Mary for the summer who helped us to settle into the house. In September, Sisters Nora and Margaret joined us. Over the years a succession of sisters

brought their talents and time to the ministry of the house. Sisters Doreen and Brenda were each head of the house for several years. At the end of February 2020, Sr. Doreen returned to the Convent and was replaced by Sister Brenda. In April, when the diocese could no longer financially support the covenant and the community was finding it hard to staff the house, we closed our ministry in the Diocese of British Columbia.



Sr. Jocelyn with Associates

The years between 2002 – 2020 were rich years, in which blessed friendships were formed. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to:

- the Sisters of St. Anne who welcomed us at our beginnings, and for our ongoing friendship with them over the years
- the Rev. John McQuarrie and the parish of St. Peter's Lakehill for the offer of their rectory as our new home, to the many people and groups in the diocese who stepped up with offers to furnish the house, with special thanks to Barbara Jenks and Ruth Brown who coordinated the donations that furnished the house on St. Peter's Road
- the Rev. Wayne and Sheila Short who renovated the basement area and built a new bedroom and interview/library room
- the many who through their donations made it possible to build in the carport to provide a beautiful chapel for St. John's House
- those avid gardeners who helped us plant a garden after the chapel was built, and over the years continued to come and help us maintain it

Continued on page 5

- those priests who came each week or month to celebrate the Eucharist in our chapel
- all those people who over the years came to share in our worship with us
- volunteers for their help: Dorothy Dahli, Sandi Austin, Susan Paterson, and Kathleen von Kanel came regularly each week, Doreen Davidson once a month and many others from time to time for projects and events. They helped us in ways too many to mention and blessed us with their presence
- our neighbours, and the many folks who helped us over the years: especially to Dave and Louise Potvin, Peter Parker, Paul Schumacher, Bob Cuthill and Bev and John Evjen who over the years fixed and repaired all manner of things for us. All of these folks, and countless others, who came to our rescue numerous times – thank you!



Sr. Doreen

And while this was going on, our ministry within the diocese and beyond became a blessing for us and for those whom we met:

- We committed ourselves to travelling around the diocese to visit and pray with the parishes; we felt welcomed and came

to know and value the friendships and support that we received.

- We became involved in the prayer life of the diocese, responding to requests to lead quiet days, retreats and workshops in parishes from one end of the Island to the other.
- We led ordination retreats for those preparing for the diaconate and the priesthood within the diocese, led clergy and lay retreats in the diocese, and responded to requests from other dioceses in Western Canada.
- People asked for spiritual direction, came for workshops on prayer beads, altar guild work, and we offered a weekly contemplative prayer group.
- We supported parishes going through difficult

times in the breakup of congregations over controversial issues by our presence, prayer and friendship, travelling up and down the Island to be with them.

- We were part of diocesan committees: Lay Secretary and Diocesan Council, Truth and Reconciliation /Aboriginal Neighbours, Safe Church, Relationship Matters and many other committees and outreach events of the diocese. Part of the outreach from SSJD was to volunteer at the diocesan office in whatever capacity was needed to help the staff there, and our Oblate Doreen Davidson has worked there each week over many years.
- We volunteered at the Open Door, the Rainbow Kitchen, the Shoebox Ministry, C.A.R.T.S and at Our Place.
- We volunteered at the Cathedral in pastoral care, in giving tours, and in the healing ministry.
- We offered to mentor university students and the Emmaus Community in its early beginnings.
- We travelled all over the West visiting our Associates from Manitoba to Vancouver Island and were also a support to our Oblates. Our times with Associates, Oblates and friends of the community offered rich blessings of friendship and support.
- We invited people to join us in our Chapel for our services and offered hospitality to those who came to share life with us.



Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Brenda, Sr. Sue and Bp. Logan McMenamie

There were many unique highlights that those who lived at St. John's House will carry with us forever. One such highlight and a deeply moving experience for several sisters was the occasion of Holy

Week at St. John's House in the spring of 2019. A serious accident to a sister prevented us from leaving her to attend any parish for the Holy Week celebrations. Then the Rev. Canon Bill Morrison came to the rescue—he offered to celebrate Holy Week at the house with us, around the dining room table, as the injured sister could not negotiate the stairs to the chapel. As one sister said, “All of the services were so special in different ways. They



Barbara Jenks, Sr. Dorothy, Rev. Canon Bill Morrison, and Sr. Amy Joy at the table on Maundy Thursday

spoke to me profoundly. Bill made it seem so real, like the first Holy Week and Easter when Jesus broke bread and shared the cup around the table in the Upper Room.”

And we enjoyed the beauty of the Island – the mountains, trees, flowers, beaches and as another sister wrote: “I think it was the people, the relationships and friendships that we developed over the years that made BC most memorable.”

It is with grateful hearts, and with the sadness of saying goodbye and leaving such a rich and blessed ministry amongst wonderful people that we acknowledge the blessings that our community received from this extraordinary adventure!

Sr. Doreen, SSJD



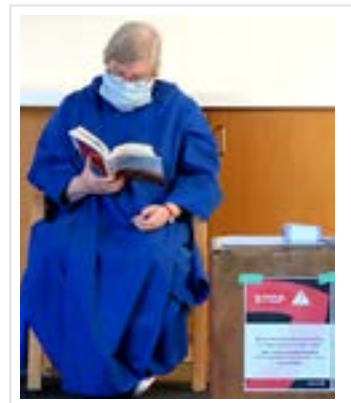
Can you identify these sisters? Answer on page 7



Sr. Dorothy vacuums the lobby



Happy Easter card from quarantined sisters



Sr. Anne awaits staff at the Screening station

Coping with COVID-19 at the Convent



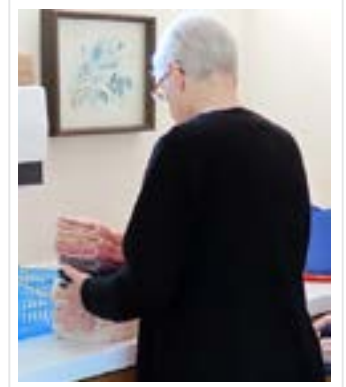
Sr. Louise washes her hands



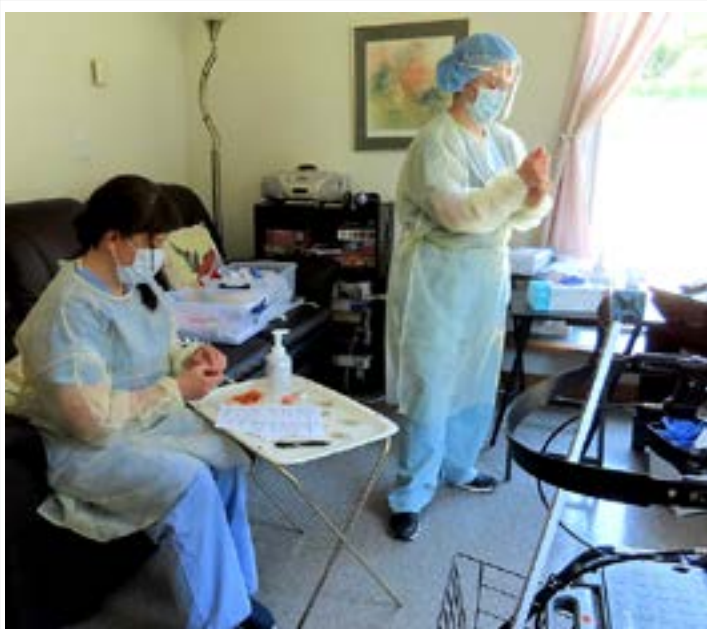
Sister wipes her hands



Sr. Dorothy washes her hands



Sr. Wilma puts out clean hand towels



NYGH staff prepare to test sisters for COVID-19



Empty bookroom corridor



Sisters dispersed widely in refectory



Half-empty chapel for Palm Sunday



Staff disinfect provisions as they arrive



Sr. Margaret Ruth makes masks

The faces behind the masks (page 6)

*Back row, l to r, Sr. Elizabeth, Sr. Dorothy, Sr. Wendy Grace
Front row, l to r, Sr. Brenda, Sr. Elizabeth Ann*

Food for the Soul (2020-2021)

We are not enclosing a printed copy of **Food for the Soul** for 2020-2021 because we don't know when or if we will be able to open our Guest House because of COVID-19. A description of the **Food for the Soul** events will be on our website by the end of July. We have postponed the visit of Kathleen Norris until October, 2021. The events **in the Fall will all be on Zoom**; the events in 2021 may also be on Zoom.

Below is a list of events:

- **Silent Directed In-home Retreats**
Sept. 15 - 17, 2020; Mar. 16 - 18, 2021; May 14 - 16, 2021; Aug. 3 - 5, 2021
- **St. John of the Cross – The Growth of the Soul (Max Woolaver)** Oct. 16 - 18, 2020
- **Discover Spiritual Treasures in the World's Religions (Kathy Murtha)** Oct. 31, 2020
- **Relaunching Your Life in Retirement (Murray MacAdam & Heather Bennett)**
Nov 13 - 14, 2020
- **Going Home Another Way: Temptation and New Life (Bp. Jenny Andison)**
Nov. 28, 2021
- **Mystical Landscapes and the Divine Gaze (Katharine Lochnan)** Jan. 23, 2021
- **Taizé Weekend: “You are the Living Source; You are Fire and Love” (Rebecca Peters)** Feb. 5 – 7, 2021
- **Lenten Quiet Day (Bp. Andrew Asbil)** Feb. 20, 2021
- **The Spirituality of the Psalms (John Bell)** Mar. 5 - 7, 2021
- **The Spirituality of the Book of Kells (Thomas Power)** Mar. 20, 2021
- **Holy Week Retreat: Centering Prayer—A Whispered Amen (Pauline Head)**
Wednesday - Sunday, March 31 - April 4, 2021
- **Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) Reflection and Contemplation on The Dialogue (Maureen McDonnell)** Apr. 24, 2021
- **Come to the Table (Cathy A.J. Hardy)** May 7 - 9, 2021
- **Women at a Crossroads** July 2 – 25, 2021

Fee: Quiet Day \$30.00. Retreat: \$110.00

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

www.ssjd.ca

St. John's Convent

233 Cummer Ave., Toronto, ON M2M 2E8

416-226-2201 FAX: 416-226-2131

email: convent@ssjd.ca



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