

GREETINGS IN THE RISEN LORD



**FROM
THE
MONKS
AT
Holy
CROSS
PRIORY**

JUBILEE!

In the Bible, a “Jubilee” was a year of emancipation and restoration to be celebrated every fifty years by the whole people of Israel. The enslaved were to be released and alienated lands returned. That makes a Jubilee a fitting accompaniment to Holy Week and Easter. This year, two weeks before Easter Holy Cross Priory and the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine both celebrated Jubilees. On March 19, the Sisters celebrated the *Silver Jubilee* of Sr. Jessica Kennedy, SSJD, and a few days later, on April 21st, the Monks of Holy Cross Priory celebrated the *Golden Jubilee* of the Revd. Canon Christian George Swayne, OHC with a festal Eucharist and reception. Above we see them both: Canon Swayne on the left, Sister Jessica on the right, standing on either side of the Most Revd. Michael Peers, retired Primate of Canada, who presided at the Eucharist. This Eucharist was celebrated in presence of the Most Revd. Colin Johnson, Archbishop of Toronto. Please join us and them in giving thanks for God’s wonderful gifts of grace in the lives of Sister Jessica and Fr. Christian!



Willie Lopez and the Resurrection:

One of the most popular movies of 1990 was “Ghost”, starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, and Whoopi Goldberg. Swayze was the Ghost, whose love after death enabled him to save his beloved before going on to his

reward. It was and is immensely popular, and remains one of my own personal favourites. One reason for this is its very hopeful view of life after death. What is frequently ignored is that it is also utterly ruthless—it contains no mercy at all.

In the course of the film “ghosts” (the recently departed) are invisible to the living, but at some point receive their reward—they are either drawn up to the light if they are good, or are carried off by horrible shades if they are not. But it is all completely impersonal. God never appears, either as Judge or Saviour, and there is neither appeal nor second chance.

In the film this works dramatically because the “good” are people like our perceived selves—possessors of ordinary middle class virtues, with some good will, but little in the way of religious commitment; the wicked on the other hand are obvious villains, equally devoid of religion, but readily

This is Holy Cross’ 130th year, our 41st in Canada. We hope you will keep us in your prayers—one way to do so is to join us by using the following prayer regularly:

Prayer for OHC Canada

God our Saviour, we desire to do your will. Help the Order of the Holy Cross to plan wisely for its continuing ministry in Canada. Help them and us to discern our paths, to find new ways and places to serve, and to live with integrity so that both we and they will be enabled to share the monastic commitment and values they were founded to represent; We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

identifiable as traitors or petty hoods, justly condemned.

Or are they? In the film, Patrick Swayze's principal virtue is to be a generally "good guy" with a genuine love for the heroine. It is only indirectly relevant that in real life his goodness was much more complex or that in 2009 he died very courageously of cancer. It is perhaps possible to concede that, as portrayed, Carl Brunner, the movie's principal villain, got his just reward. But what about Willie Lopez, played by Rick Aviles? Aviles too is dead, of complications attendant upon AIDS. But even in the movie, did he get his just reward?

It may be doubted. In the movie Willie is the actual murderer, a thief who looks the part; but even there—though ignorant and almost entirely self-centered—he comes across as more victim than villain. Is he to be condemned impersonally to the shades and drawn off without hope or recourse? Swayze displays pity for Carl, but none whatever for Willie.

But why, then, is this movie so comforting, and so popular? In large part, it is because almost all the characters are so two-dimensional. That is appropriate to the genre, but it bears little resemblance to the life most of us know ourselves to live. In the movie, the one exception is Willie. He is the one character really like ourselves—not because we act the way he did, but because our virtues as well as our vices are equally complex. Do we deserve to be carried off? Or will we be (as another character puts it) "one of the lucky ones" who achieve the light? And does this have anything to do with Easter?

Not much. For despite the warm feeling it engenders, the message of this film is the opposite of Easter. The film proclaims an impersonal justice; Easter is about *mercy*. That is why Willie is so important. Easter is about mercy for Willie. Indeed, in many ways he is better off than most of us—Willie can't even pretend to be a "good guy". Most of us find that all too easy, which makes it that much harder for us to ask for (or receive) mercy.

Now *mercy* makes me uncomfortable. I'd much rather be like the fictional (but not the real) Patrick Swayze and be secure in my "good guyness"; but it was the real Swayze who died so bravely. It is only by accepting our real selves—that we and Willie are in the same boat—that we can really rise from the dead.

Did Willie (or Rick Aviles) accept the outstretched hand? We will never know. But Easter celebrates the fact that the hand is always there. The first step is to acknowledge that we need it—that we aren't "good guys" (or gals). *Then* we can receive mercy.

The Resurrection and the outstretched hand have been portrayed in a variety of ways; but none, to my mind, is more moving than the Descent into Hell. The Risen Christ, having been through death and the worst that it can bring, rises triumphantly from the land of the shades, holding the hands of Adam and Eve. That is the moment of triumph, mercy available to all: *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, giving life to those who are in the tombs*. All you have to do is grasp the hand! That is Easter. Let us hope that not only Patrick Swayze and Rick Aviles, but all the Willies of this world—including us—will have the courage to grasp the hand. Step one is to ask for mercy—and it is absolutely free. Happy Easter!

RICHARD PAUL VAGGIONE, OHC



Community News

Like most of Canada, this year we didn't have to dream of a "white Christmas" or a "white" January, February, or March! This didn't prevent us at all from being busy. **Br. David** continued his regular ministries at St. James' Cathedral, and St. Barnabas' and St. Hilda's parishes in Toronto. In February he was part of a team invited to make an official visitation to St. Gregory's Abbey, Three Rivers, MI. On top of that he helped us bring our kitchen renovation to completion and prepare for Br. Christian's Golden Jubilee. **Br. Christian** himself has been flourishing as an "elder", and continues his ministry of hospitality and spiritual direction in our "liminal centre" (see next article). **Br. Leonard** has been teaching Church History at St. Nicholas' Seminary in Cape Coast Ghana since September, and joyfully returned in mid-March. He is now getting his "Canadian feet" again, visiting Toronto parishes, and getting reacquainted with friends. **Br. Reginald** continues assisting **Br. Brian** at St. Paul's Rexdale, attended an "in person" meeting of our Community's Council at West Park, NY, helped grade ordination exams for the U.S. Episcopal Church, and continues his work as Parish Selection Coach for a number of local parishes. As our Canadian Novice Master, he has been particularly active in working with several aspirants. In January **Br. Richard** achieved his "three-score and ten", but has not yet found it to be "but labour and sorrow". He continues his ministry of writing and spiritual direction and, though not teaching this term, continues to direct doctoral theses. In March he led a Quiet Day and preached at St. Barnabas' Church in Ottawa, where many people remember previous OHC visits. In December, and again in March we were delighted to welcome **Br. Adrian, OHC**, a "monk not in residence", whose formal connection with the Order is through this House. And, through it all we have continued our daily celebration of the Divine Office and the Holy Eucharist, which remain the centres of our lives. Happy Easter!



A Ministry of Hospitality

My life as a Benedictine Monk is one devoted not only to prayer, but to engagement in the ministry of hospitality. Hospitality, as I reflect upon it, is to be understood as a ministry of both place and process. It is seen as a liminal place: a monastery or retreat centre that provides for a short period of time for pilgrims to be set apart from their normal routine and, as a process, either individually or communally to relax, to discover oneself and one's relationship to God, to pray and be renewed in order to return refreshed to the world.

As I reflect on my ministry in the Diocese of Toronto, I find that an essential element of what I do falls under the above understanding of hospitality as process. It does not matter whether I am wearing my hat as an *NCD* (National Church Development) coach, an "Appreciative Inquiry" facilitator working to help parishes resolve conflict, or as the Pastoral Associate at my parish, my goal in all cases, is to enable people to see and experience that all life belongs to God. I do this (at least, that's my intention) by directing whatever process I employ to help people experience the beautiful and holy as something near to them and attainable. I attempt to provide people with the space, and give them permission to experience or explore the following questions: *How do I see my world and my role in it? How do I see God? What is the faith that drives me?* Essentially, the goal of hospitality is wholeness for individuals and communities.

As an *NCD* coach I try to help a parish identify its strengths, and places where it is stagnant. The goal is to work at wholeness and health. "Appreciative Inquiry" is a method that provides the opportunity for a congregation to talk about and imagine their preferred future. This preferred future is rooted in the best of the past of a congregation's life and history. In both processes people see and experience through their corporate life both the beautiful and the holy, and therefore are inspired to strive for greater health, wholeness and holiness. The journey of wholeness (hospitality) enables one to return to a life with others with renewed hope and vitality for a rich, true life with others. Hospitality keeps open the doors to an expanding life. Hospitality is the space and process to wholeness to self identity, to love, and faith in the wonder of living.

REGINALD MARTIN CRENSHAW, OHC

Do you think you might have a Holy Cross Vocation? To explore, write Br. Reginald our Novice Master at reginald.martin@live.ca



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