

# LEADING EDGE ... *Edge Thoughts*

**Come to the Edge.** *We might Fall. Come to the edge. It's too high!*  
**COME TO THE EDGE.** And they came; and he pushed; and they flew.

Christopher Logue – *Ode to the Dodo – Poems from 1953 – 78*

ARCAN Logo Designed by Phyllis Gallant, CND



## ARCAN MISSION STATEMENT

Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the charisms of each religious congregation the mission of ARCAN is to provide a supportive network committed to adult learning, inclusive actions, embracing diversity, along with an awareness of the new consciousness that all life is sacred and connected.

## ARCAN VISION STATEMENT

The vision of ARCAN is to be a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada living a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spirituality for the 21st century. We inspire to invite one another to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all.

## NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

**Anne Bown**, Mercy Associate, NL

**Mary MacLean**, PEI Marthas Associate

**Ronnie Macdonald**, Charities of Halifax Associate

**Deirdre Greene Lono**, PBVM Associate

## We are Pilgrims of Hope

### Message from Newsletter Committee

We hope you enjoy this Winter 2025 issue of “The Leading Edge” as we stay connected through ARCAN with the associates and sisters of the Atlantic congregations. In honour of this **Jubilee Year of Hope**, this issue focuses on **Pilgrims of Hope**, with stories and reflections from our congregations, associates and friends.

You will find suggestions of materials to read, view and participate in. The Pope’s Jubilee prayer and a beautiful poem that reminds us that the meaning of Christmas applies to life and ministry all year round are also included.

We thank everyone who made submissions and invite feedback, which is always appreciated.

God Bless!

*Anne, Deirdre, Mary & Ronnie*



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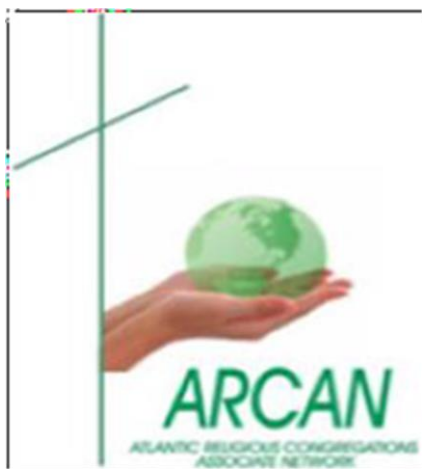
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Reflection on Jubilee Year Theme

As our Church begins the observance of the 2025 Jubilee Year with the theme of “Pilgrims of Hope”, we focus on the two terms of “pilgrims” and “hope”.

Pilgrims are people who make a significant decision to intentionally and physically journey from one place to another as an occasion for journeying in faith and contemplation anticipating a spiritual change from where we are at to a new place with a deeper understanding of ourselves and our faith.

In this jubilee year we are invited on a journey of hope by acknowledging that our faith provides a special hope not always apparent in the difficulties and concerns of the world in which we live. We receive this hope at Baptism, to share through our Universal Church with the rest of the world. Our hope is born of our awareness of the love God shared and continues to share with his Church, through the life, passion, and resurrection of Jesus, and with the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Our pilgrimage may move us into a time of sharing our hope, the hope of the Church, into places of pain, war, despair, loneliness, isolation, and fear, where the love of God is not recognized, but may be recognized through our attitudes and actions. When our individual, and the Church’s attitudes and actions are filled with positive hope, and expressed in compassion and love, then surely our 2025 Pilgrimage will affect improved personal, and global co-operation and peace.

Our invitation in this Jubilee Year is a year-long closing Eucharistic rite, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord and each other” by sharing the hope that is inherent in our faith.

*Submitted by Mary MacLean, PEI Marthas Associate*



## Jubilee 2025 Prayer from Pope Francis

Father in heaven,  
 may the *faith* you have given us  
 in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
 and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
 in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
 reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
 for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
 into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both  
 humanity and the whole cosmos  
 in the sure expectation  
 of a new heaven and a new earth,  
 when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
 your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
 reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
 a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread  
 the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
 throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,  
 be glory and praise for ever.

Amen

*Franciscus*

## 2025 Fall Zoom Gathering Synopsis

The meeting began with welcoming, prayer,  
 and a land acknowledgment.

Check-ins were heard from all eight Associate  
 groups, and from sisters of five of the  
 Congregations. Details of all these Check-ins  
 would need a great deal of space, but they  
 certainly detail the energy and commitment  
 of the Sisters and Associates in our Atlantic  
 area who have touched and will continue to  
 touch many lives within their communities  
 through concerted efforts of the Sisters even  
 as their numbers diminish, and through the  
 Associates whose numbers remain  
 stable. Topics and activities included  
 retreats; study groups; spiritual sessions;  
 Bible studies; forums; sessions on  
 vision/mission statements; book clubs;  
 outreach projects; local, national, and  
 international meetings; anniversary  
 celebrations; orientation of new associates;  
 the Synod on Synodality; social issues of  
 climate change, colonization, addictions, and  
 women in recovery; and ecumenism. These  
 are just some areas the check-ins detailed.

The business part of our meeting included  
 decisions on finances, Newsletter Committee  
 membership, expanding membership of the  
 ARCAN Steering Committee, proposals of  
 topics and resource people for the Spiritual  
 Session for the next ARCAN meeting in April  
 2025. A re-cap of the Spiritual Session on  
 Saturday morning, October 19th with Sr. Joan  
 Lewis CND on "Showing Up" is also provided  
 in this Newsletter.

*Submitted by Mary MacLean, PEI Marthas  
 Associate*

## Fall Zoom Gathering Spiritual Session: Sr Joan Lewis on "Showing Up"



Sister Joan Lewis, CND, gave a presentation on "Showing Up" as a way to live our lives. She began with Richard Rohr's definition of "Showing Up":

*"For me, "showing up" means bringing our hearts and minds into the actual sufferings and problems of the world. It means engagement, social presence, and sincere concern for justice and peace, and for others beyond ourselves."*

We may feel we do not have what it takes to show up, but we need to remember that "God does not call the EQUIPPED. **God EQUIPS the called."**

By saying, "Here I am, Lord", we let ourselves be found by the God who is always near us.

God loved us so much that he sent us into the world to share who we are as gift. We are to bless others, serve them, love them and care for them; encourage, support, uplift and nurture them. Our presence in the world is part of God's plan for reconciliation and healing.

Jesus 'showed up' at his baptism. The heavens opened and a voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased". At our baptism we are anointed with oil which is a sign that we are joined to Christ and share in the threefold mission as: Priest; Prophet; King (Queen):

- We serve as Priest through our sacrificial efforts to bring people to God.
- We serve as Prophet through our witness to the truth in word and deed.
- We serve as King (Queen) in an effort to lead others.

God has called us by name and has loved us before we were born. How are we living out our Baptismal vows?

Jesus 'showed up' through his ministry. Jesus 'showed up' to ordinary people, on ordinary days, and did extraordinary things. By virtue of our Confirmation, we receive counsel and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Am I aware that Jesus is in all those I meet, in all creation, and that Jesus is present in my life at each moment? Each time I meet another on my journey, JESUS IS SHOWING UP in them, and JESUS IS SHOWING UP THROUGH ME.

How do I understand my ministry as an Associate, a parishioner, a community member; as a follower of Jesus? Are we using all our talents, gifts, training, and opportunities for God's work of building the Church and uniting all things in Christ? St. Peter reminds us:

*"Each one of you has received a special grace, so like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others. If you are a speaker, speak in words which seem to come from God; If you are a helper, help as though every action was done at God's orders; so that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ, since to him alone belong all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10-11)*

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Fall Zoom Gathering Spiritual Session: Sr Joan Lewis on "Showing Up" *cont.*

Our service to God's kingdom is an extension of Jesus' works. It's something we do with Him, not just something we do for Him. Or better said, it's what Jesus does through us.

Discovering God's purpose for our lives frees us to ...

- > say "**yes**" to things that align with the purpose God has for us.
- > say "**no**" to the things we are not meant to engage or undertake.
- > live **confidently** because we know God is with us and has equipped us
- > live **bodily** because we know it is God who has designed the plan and purpose for our lives.

To recap, ministry is all about love; bringing our hearts and minds into the actual suffering and problems of the world. But before we can help others, we need to begin with ourselves and remember the first commandment: Love God and Love your Neighbour as Yourself. Unconditional love means loving ourselves in such a way that we feel free to be what we are now, in this moment.

Are there people waiting for us to "Show Up"? Are there people who can say, "I knew you would come."

Submitted by Anne Bown - Mercy Associate

## ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN & ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS



Photo by Sharon Jacquard shows Associates Donna Schroeter (left) and Mary Matheson signing postcards.



### *Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception,*

Associates, staff and friends participated in the Development and Peace-Caritas Canada fall awareness and action campaign in autumn 2024. In Saint John, N.B., they signed more than 40 postcards which Development and Peace will later give to federal legislators. Sisters also encouraged others to access fall action resources free online at [www.devp.org/campaign/resources](http://www.devp.org/campaign/resources)

With the theme, "Reaping Our Rights", the campaign focuses on advocating for and with peasants and small-scale farmers in the Global South. It calls for mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation for Canadian companies operating abroad.

The campaign also highlights the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas – "a major victory for peasant movements around the world".

Submitted by Zita Longobardi and Mary Beth McCurdy, SCIC, Co-chairs of the 170<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (30 May 2024)

## The Martha New Growers Program:

*New ways to address food security, support young farmers, and care for the Earth*



The Martha New Growers program began from the inspiration of Sister Florence Kennedy in 2011, after watching the documentary “Dirt: The Movie” and wondering how the Sisters could reconnect with the farming history of the Marthas in a new way, using the land and infrastructure to support young people, local food security, and care for creation. In 2013, an acre was cultivated and mentors David and Jen Greenberg were signed on. The first New Growers

joined the program in 2014 to learn things like crop planning, soil fertility, growing seedlings, building hoop houses as well as how to market and sell their produce at local farmers markets and to local businesses. Many of the total of seventeen participants are now independent farmers or have continued on at other farms.

Initially, the program also provided public workshops on new farming practices, like building hoop houses. These became less frequent through the years, but there seems to be a real community interest to start the workshops again. In recent years, the global pandemic, climate impacts, housing challenges, growing food insecurity, and other realities have led to changing needs for farmers, and young people wanting to farm. Also, new farming practices have emerged since the program started. We are now recognizing that to respond to the needs of the community, participants, and the land, the program will need to change. With the help of the mentors and current New Growers, we’re now exploring what that will look like, including new ways to address food security, support young farmers, and care for the Earth. ***From the 2019-2024 CSM Leadership Report of the Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, page 33***

### Some Suggested Watching

Msgr Dario Viganò, for the Dicastery of Evangelization's "***Jubilee is Culture***" initiative recommends the true story "One Life", starring Anthony Hopkins (2023) as Nicholas Winton. Anthony Hopkins will make you a believer and “One Life” may just give you the shot of hope needed to face today’s troubled world of war, violence, and human suffering. One person truly can make a difference. (One Life can be seen on Apple TV; Microsoft Store; Amazon Video)

Another film recommended by Msgr Viganò is “***La Chimera***” (2023) starring Josh O’Connor. Perhaps all of us have one goal in life that has been elusive. Everyone has their own chimera, something we want to accomplish, but it’s always one step beyond our reach. Not everything is meant for human eyes, and our hope lies in what our souls will see. And maybe looking for our own chimera will help us find the fulfilment of our lives. As lyrics, the Ballad of Arthur the Dowser proclaim “All he longed for was a full life.” (La Chimera can be seen on Hulu; Apple TV; Microsoft Store; Amazon Video)

## Pilgrimage of Hope

### [A young woman reflects on her pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago de Compostella](#)

The Camino de Santiago is also called “The Way of Saint James” and it is many different routes that all eventually end in the city of Santiago de Compostela where Saint James is buried. Everyone believes that they have their own “Way” to make, and everyone has their own reasons for traveling this ancient pilgrimage route. Some are hiking because of religious reasons, some have lost their jobs and are literally looking for a path to follow, some are dealing with the loss of a loved one, some are dealing with a relationship break up, some are doing it for an adventure, some have no idea why they are following the Way, but feel called to do so. As you hike, you follow yellow arrows and shells that guide you along your path.



*1The scallop shell has long been a symbol of pilgrimage, particularly in Christian pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. The intricacies of this symbol, the ways it has changed over time and its importance to the pilgrims who undertake this journey have been discussed for centuries. The symbol of the scallop shell goes beyond its aesthetic appeal and holds deeper significance in the context of spiritual journeys, making it an essential aspect of Pilgrimage*

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### Pilgrimage of Hope, *cont.*

I made my Camino in the summer of 2016, planned to hike again in 2019, but needed surgery, booked flights for 2020, but of course I had to cancel, and I attempted again in 2024, but I fell ill after the first 100 km and had to stop. I still feel the call to go again, and I am hoping and praying that will happen in the summer of 2026.

If you followed the French Way, which begins in Saint Jean Pied de Port and ends in Santiago, your first day or two usually involve climbing from 200m above sea level to 1400m and back down to about 900m. This was very difficult for me as an Islander with our highest elevation of Charlottetown being less than 50m. As I climb, I struggle to catch my breath, pray that I will make it and am always thankful for the beautiful views that allow me to stop and photograph. I remember my first time climbing up the mountain, wondering what on earth I was doing, why I was attempting to do such a physical pilgrimage when I barely go for walks here at home. The second time, I was just as out of shape, but I knew what I was in for. While gasping for air, I alternated between smiling at the views and memories of my past Camino family and crying because I was so emotional taking this on alone and missing my past Camino family!

The French Way is known as being incredibly physically demanding for the first third, very mentally demanding for the second third, and emotionally demanding for the final section. For me, I feel called to do the Camino for religious reasons which also supports my mental, emotional and physical health! One needs hope, strength and tenacity to push through each demanding section.

As demanding as the Camino can be, it can be as spiritually fulfilling as you would like it to be. You spend as much or as little time praying, outside on the path, in the churches and cathedrals, with others or alone. You get to know others and see the universality of the church when you go to Mass and meet others from all over the world. You break bread and drink wine (if you're a wine drinker) with your newfound family as Jesus did in his lifetime, with no judgment of who anyone is or what you do in the "real world" as you are all pilgrims following the same path.

To this day, I pray that God sends me the yellow arrows to guide me in my everyday life, and I hope that I will be able to again have the opportunity to follow the yellow arrows of the Camino.

*Submitted by Tina Baglole, a pilgrim of hope in PEI*





## Pilgrimage: A Retired Family Doctor Reflects on Walking the Camino de Santiago

I was asked to reflect on my experiences of walking the Camino de Santiago, one of the most famous pilgrimages in the world. I started this 600 km hike in 2018 with two friends. We set out from a little town in southern France, the traditional starting point for the French Way of the Camino. We walked over the Pyrenees into Spain, each carrying 20 lbs of clothes and water. We stayed in hostels or “albergues”, covering about 20-25 km a day along the north coast of Spain. We walked along a well - marked path following the distinctive clam shell signposts. Although traditionally a religious pilgrimage, I knew the many modern pilgrims joined this hike for a variety of reasons, often related to fitness and the joy of walking in nature. Before I started the Camino, I was hoping to have some time while walking to contemplate my life, and my goals for the future. I was also excited about meeting fellow pilgrims and learning about their lives.

I did meet a lot of interesting people from around the world. Some had walked this pilgrimage before or were doing it as the fulfilment of a promise to themselves or others. Some were atoning for mistakes they had made in their lives.



*Dr Pat O'Shea: The mountains were the Pyrenees on the first day as we left France and went into Spain. We walked through a pass in the mountains on the first day.*



*Above: The Camino clamshell is seen throughout the trip, pointing the direction of a pilgrimage route. Pilgrims may leave stones at spots like this to signify getting rid of worries or burdens.*

Some were challenging themselves physically. It seemed that everyone had a different reason for hiking. For a variety of reasons, I left the Camino after about 200 km, and, unfortunately, did not reach Santiago de Compostela.

The hiking was tough as expected, with a lot of hills. My footwear was good, I had no blisters, and the stiffness eased after a few days of hiking. The hostels were crowded, and sleeping was often difficult. The scenery was beautiful but the weather was very hot. The Pilgrim Masses, held in many villages and towns in the evening, were welcome times to unwind and relax in a cool church. As in North America, these Masses were attended mainly by older people. Sadly, I noticed that a majority of these beautiful churches were very much in need of some upkeep.

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**Pilgrimage: A Retired Family Doctor Reflects on Walking the Camino de Santiago – Cont'd**

I enjoyed walking with my friends. Upon reflection, I think the Camino would have been more lonely, if I had been doing it on my own.

There were many lessons learned by being a pilgrim, even for a short time. I learned I need companionship of friends and family. I also realized I am not that unique in the world. We all want the same things in life, despite our cultural differences. I learned people are usually kind and generous. I learned how little one needs to carry, in order to meet the basics of life: a bit of food, water, good footwear, a bit of clothing, and a place to sleep and shower. I realized we need fewer material possessions to carry than we may think.

The things in life that are really important are kept in your head, not in the knapsack on your back.

I'm glad I went.

*Submitted by Patrick O'Shea, retired family doctor, NL*

**Some Suggested Reading*****"The Heart at the Heart of the World: Re-visioning the Sacred Heart for the Ecozoic Era" by Mary Frohlick, RSCJ***

Traditional forms of devotion to the Sacred Heart have waned among Catholics in recent decades. Here, Mary Frohlich, a sister of the Sacred Heart, seeks to reinterpret this traditional devotion as central to Christian spirituality in the 21st century. (Available through Amazon)

***"Let your Heartbreak Be Your Guide" by Adam Bucko***

Adam Bucko's personal story and new book, *Let Your Heartbreak Be Your Guide*, has been pointing out for at least a decade now that a new monastic spirit, different from the Christian kind that began in antiquity, has manifested in the lives of people today. As we wake up to the callousness of our culture, the monastic dimension within our hearts is finding its Easter Sunday. (Available through [www.fatheradambucko.com/books](http://www.fatheradambucko.com/books))

***"Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life" by Jane Marie Thibault and Richard L. Morgan***

The Last Third of life, from age 60 on up, doesn't have to be feared. When viewed from a Christian perspective, this season of life can be meaningful, enduring, and even joyful, say the authors. (Available through Amazon)

***"Sacred Time Embracing an Intentional Way of Life" by Christine Valters Paintner***

We live in a world where there never seems to be enough time for all we want and need to do. In *Sacred Time: Embracing an Intentional Way of Life*, Christine Valters Paintner guides us as we move beyond our own lives and embrace a world that urges us toward rest, reflection, and growth. (Available through Amazon)

## “Blessing the Future...” A pilgrimage toward fulfillment



At the beginning of the preparation year for our Chapter in October 2023 (which is held every 4 years, but was postponed from 2022 due to COVID) we chose the theme **“Gathering the Wisdom...Blessing the Future...”**

For some time, there has been the realization that we are in the process of coming to fulfillment in the way that we were known in the past as a community. But we also know that religious life, as a response to the

Gospel has not ended by any means! As in all of life, everything is connected, and all things evolve. So too with us. We are in a time of transformation and newness. What the outcome will be needs to be “leaned into” and lived with courage and risk.

As we move forward, we want to leave a legacy that enables our Charism of Charity to thrive long after we are gone. With that in mind and heart, we continue to consciously work with our Partners in Mission to establish endowments to Community Foundations, Health Care and Educational Institutions, Diocesan endeavors, as well as Social Justice and Ecology Initiatives. In particular, the Community Foundations can respond to various groups and causes we have supported over the years and can no longer do so. This year we celebrated our 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so you can imagine how many groups and causes there were!

These endowments will be our legacy into the future. We are ever grateful and humbled by the realization that we are standing on the shoulders of countless visionary women in the history of our community. This is how we are and desire to further entrust our mission to “Bless the Future” long after we have come to fulfillment. In the words of the mystic Julian of Norwich, we know that “All shall be well...and all manner of things shall be well.”

*Submitted by Sr Pat Poole, SCIC, NB*

### When the Song of the Angels is Stilled *by Howard Therman*

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
 When the star in the sky is gone,  
 When the kings and the princes are home,  
 When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
 The work of Christmas begins:  
     To find the lost,  
     To heal the broken,  
     To feed the hungry,  
     To release the prisoner,  
     To rebuild the nations,  
 To bring peace among people,  
 To make music in the heart.

## A Pilgrim's Journey to Full Communion

I am writing about the RCIA program (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). It is a process for adults who are interested in finding out more about the Catholic Faith or are hoping to become Catholic through the reception of the Sacraments. I am writing about my faith journey and what it has meant to my life as a child of God.

I was baptized Roman Catholic but like many, my path as a Christian was not straight forward. I had encountered many hardships and distractions that led me away from God. This led me to experience loneliness. I searched and was encouraged by someone who loved me, to go back to the church. I was not sure what I would find.

This journey has led me to encounters with many beautiful people, moved through the Holy Spirit, who have helped me to be closer to God's presence and mercy. There have been many beautiful moments of love shared with both parishioners and the wider community.

Last Easter I received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and was now fully brought into the Catholic Church. For me this was a humbling, beautiful blessing where I was moved by the Holy Spirit. The words that "God moves in mysterious ways", were not lost on me through the preparation for Confirmation. I connected with God in many beautiful moments of what this sacrament means and continues to mean to me as a child of God.

Once I received the sacrament, my human mind was curious whether the Holy Spirit would visit me similar to Pentecost with the apostles. Would I be turned into a saint, would I have visions, would I speak in tongues? While these do occur, they didn't for me.

In this journey of faith, we find ourselves seeking God and being sought by him. As I grow in my faith, and with the love of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, I ask that I may know Him more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly.

*Christopher John Paul Devine. St. John's, NL*

**Join the Lenten 2025 Series, "Experiencing Prayer and Spiritual Conversation".** This series is online on Thursdays, March 06, 13, 20, 27, April 03, and 10th from 7:00 - 8:15 PM (AST) 7:30 - 8:45 (NLT) Register by email to: [atlanticignatianministry@gmail.com](mailto:atlanticignatianministry@gmail.com)

