

MARTHA ASSOCIATES *Sycamore 2022*

A Very Special Project: "You Touched My Heart"

In 2020, the Martha Associates marked their 40th anniversary. Due to the corona virus pandemic, we were unable to celebrate together and with the sisters. We did, however, wish to mark the occasion with a special project, **"You Touched my Heart"**. This booklet is a collection of letters, written from the hearts of Martha Associates, in gratitude, remembrance and joy for the Sisters of St. Martha. We

had hoped to present the booklets in person to the Sisters at the Martha Associate Fall retreat of 2020, but this was not to be! While our time line was a bit delayed, we were delighted to present our beautiful Sisters of St. Martha with this special booklet in September of 2021.

All letters were written with love and affection for all the Marthas do, all the Marthas are, have been and are yet to be.....

Bless you all!!



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Very special project "You Touched My Heart"	1
Reflection from Martha Associate director	2-3
ARCAN	4
NACAR	5
Martha Justice Ministry	5-6
Mass For Shut Ins	7
Celebrating 60 years of Consecrated life:	8-9
Sr. Claudette Gallant CSM	
Beyond Retirement: The call to Service Continues	10
Martha associate Retreat	11
CENTERFOLD	12-13
Martha Retreat Centre, Lethbridge, Alberta	14
New Associates Welcomed	15
Associate Groups news: Sydney / Glace Bay	16-17
Sydney Mines	18
Trenton	19
Lethbridge	20-21
Remembrance and Collage	22-23
Gentle Blessing	Back Cover
Contact Information	Back Cover

A Reflection from The Martha Associate Director

"Sunrise, sunset; Sunrise, sunset,

Swiftly fly the years,

One season following another,

Laden with happiness and tears"

You may recognize these words as a musical selection from **"Fiddler On The Roof"**. I recently had the pleasure of watching this wonderful film again. Adapted from the 1964 Broadway Musical of the same name, it was made into a movie in 1971. Set in pre-revolutionary Russia, the story centers on Tevye, a poor milkman of Jewish tradition and values who must contend with marrying off three of his five daughters. While Tevye believes in the tradition of arranged marriages, the daughters have romantic ideas of selecting husbands for themselves, born out of love and not simply tradition! To make matters worse, growing antisemitic views begin to threaten the survival of Tevye's Ukrainian village of Anatevka.

As I watched the film, I was struck by the many similarities to our current times. Families doing their best to live in the face of so many trials and tribulations; trying to care for one's family and neighbors, desiring to pass on one's faith and traditions to the next generation, only to be faced with the obstacles that sometime seem insurmountable! Acknowledging the sting and disgrace of racism and prejudice while feeling helpless to change it. Being forced to leave your homeland with only what one can carry because of someone's senseless need to wield power over the vulnerable. And yet, even in such circumstances, love, faith and hope somehow surface, moving us ever forward!

As I continued to ponder other aspects of the film, I was reminded of something Sr. Claudette had said to me in conversation a few weeks earlier. We must acknowledge our realities in all their forms, but we must also remember that this is **"our time to live"**. That little phrase stayed with me for several days. What did it mean?

Every generation before us has had their time to live. Every generation has experienced good and bad times, sickness, but good health too, long lives and short lives, success as well as failure, poverty and wealth, love and hate. The blueprint seems to be the same.....yet different! In the book of Ecclesiastes we are told that:

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot

A time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

A time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,

A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

A time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace."

(Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8)

For me, one of the most wonderful things about living in this time is knowing Jesus, Our Lord. His story has only been known to us for just over 2000 years, but it is a story that has changed the lives of so many. His example of love and goodness is known among Christians and non-Christians. Jesus is love, hope, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. Always present to us through the Spirit of God, Jesus supports our efforts to love and serve in whatever way we can. Indeed, as baptized Christians, we have made a commitment to live the mission of Jesus: to love God and neighbor. Most especially, Jesus welcomes us to share our hearts with him by spending regular time in prayer and by living our time with a deep sense of gratitude.

And this is our time, where each day is precious and treasured, for we have no hold on tomorrow being promised. And while we must acknowledge the endless challenges and struggles of our time and do what we can to help, we must also allow ourselves to live the joys and wonders of each day.

***“This is the day the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” (Ps 118:24)***

Blessings to all,
Julia Townsend

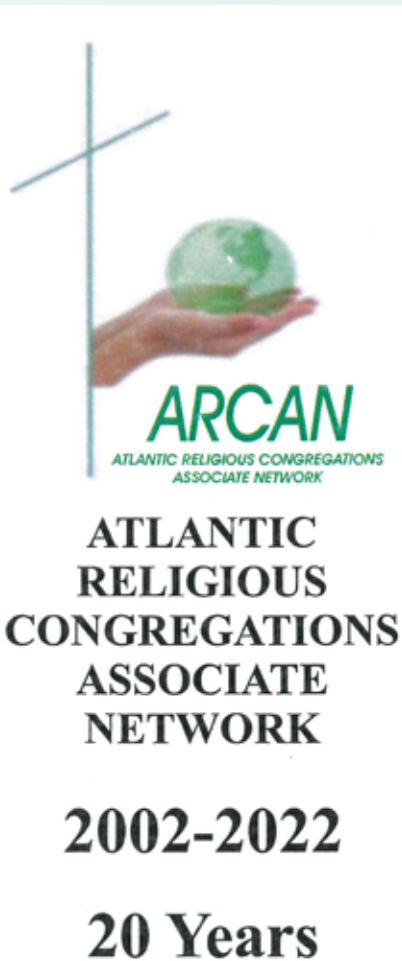


Kathy Gillis and Julia Townsend
May 20, 2022
Lethbridge, Alberta

“Proclaim the truth and do not be silent through fear”

- St. Catherine of Sienna

ARCAN



**“May we recognize
the goodness
and beauty
You have sown
in each of us”.**

*Pope Francis – from
Encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti'*

ARCAN (Atlantic Religious Congregations and Associates Network) has continued to meet virtually over the past year, 2021 and April 2022. As we look ahead, we are planning for an in-person meeting for October 2022, but we are also including the opportunity for the steering committee members to join us via ZOOM. All ARCAN members will be welcome to join us via ZOOM in October for the Saturday morning presentation given by Anne Walsh, a lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer from St. John's, NFLD. This presentation will take place on **Saturday, October 15, 2022 at 10:00 AM Atlantic time (10:30 in NFLD and 7:00 AM in the West)**. A link will be provided nearer to the date.

This year, 2022 also marks **the 20th anniversary of ARCAN**. Many of you have already participated in some of the events that were planned to celebrate the anniversary. On May 9, 2022, a Mass was livestreamed from PEI to open the celebrations. This was followed up on June 7, 2022 by a morning of reflection, looking back at the historical beginnings of ARCAN. **We welcomed co-founders of ARCAN, Sr. Alma MacLellan CND and CND associate Peg Madigan, as special guests.**

In addition, ARCAN members were invited to participate in multiple social justice activities. A list of 20 suggested activities were sent out to ARCAN members.

A commemorative bookmark was created to mark the anniversary and presented to all members.

Finally, A morning of spiritual growth will be offered to close our special year. Dr. Beverly Musgrave will speak on “Spirituality and Aging”. The exact date and links will follow in a future email.

The ARCAN executive has had a change this year. Two members have completed their terms, including our own Linda Longmire from the Trenton Associate group. The new executive is made up of three associates at present: Anne Bown, Mercy Associate from St. John's, NFLD; Dianne MacAskill, CND Associate from Sydney, NS and Julia Townsend, Martha Associate, Sydney, NS.

ARCAN has proven to be a valuable tool of communication among the sisters and associates of the 8 Congregations that make up the Association.

Member Congregations and Associates: Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish; Presentation Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception; Congregation of Notre Dame; Society of the Sacred Heart; Sisters of St. Martha of PEI; Sisters of Mercy; Sisters of Charity

As you will all remember, last year, NACAR announced its' dissolution after 25 years of faithful service effective June 30, 2022. Since the autumn of 2021, the NACAR Board has explored ways that could help to keep the NACAR mission burning. NACAR has identified legacy partners with whom we will journey for the sake of the NACAR mission, the church and the world. These partners are identified as:

- **Communicators for Women Religious (CWR):** an international network of almost 300 professional communicators in the US, Canada, Australia, Italy and Ireland who represent more than 160 religious congregations throughout the world. The CWR has expressed a commitment to support associates and to develop a relationship with associate leaders around any particular communication needs. Their website is <https://c4wr.org>
- **The Leadership Collaborative (LC):** was birthed in 2012 with a commitment to developing capacity for transformational leadership among women religious and their associates now and into the future. Check their website at <https://thelc.global/about-us/>
- **Santa Clare University (SCU):** Upon dissolution, the NACAR Board will be depositing our historical documents, manuals, and other resources in the archives at Santa Clare University, a private Jesuit university in Santa Clare, California. Details for accessing the archived material will be released at a later date.

"As we move into a new and different future, one that holds hope and possibility, we open ourselves to the God of surprises and find strength together in an unfolding that is rooted in faith"

- NACAR Board of Directors

(The above information was paraphrased from the "Update on Dissolution and Action Needed" at nacar.org)

News From The United Nations NGO



Darlene O'Leary
Martha NGO Liaison/Coordinator,
Martha Justice Ministry

I want to start by saying how grateful I am to step into the role as NGO Liaison for the Sisters of St. Martha with the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO. For the past **12 years, Sister Marion Sheridan has been the NGO Liaison** and has shared with you her passion for the work of the NGO and the importance of the voice of civil society

at the United Nations (UN). I share in the deep gratitude to Sister Marion for her wonderful work and inspiring commitment. She has reminded us all that we are global citizens and are part of a larger community that calls for justice in the world.

I have had the opportunity to shadow Sister Marion for the past year, which has allowed me to learn about the NGO (non-governmental organization) and the UN. This included meeting with Sister Teresa Kotturan, the Sisters of Charity NGO Representative, who is deeply engaged in the work of the UN and the areas of priority for the Federation. Sister Teresa offered several participants a comprehensive, virtual orientation in the winter that provided a very helpful overview and history of the Federation at the UN.

This February, Sister Marion and I, along with our fellow

News From The United Nations NGO

Martha Justice Ministry Core Group member from Lethbridge, Mark Nixon, participated, virtually, in the annual **UN Commission for Social Development**. This was the 60th meeting of the Commission (CSocD60), and the **theme was “Inclusive and resilient recovery from Covid-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all it’s forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda.”**

The Commission included high-level panels and presentations leading up to the adoption of a resolution and outcomes document. Country representatives had the opportunity to share their plans to respond to the pandemic and address poverty and hunger.

During the Commission, the **Civil Society Forum** took place, engaging UN NGOs in the Commission theme with a series of side-events on related issues. The **NGO Committee for Social Development drafted a Civil Society Declaration** highlighting the importance of countries remaining committed to ending poverty and hunger by building forward better through national floors for social protection, clean energy and sustainability, ending discrimination, and closing the digital divide.

Ahead of the Commission, we had an opportunity to meet with **Rasha al-Katta from the Permanent Mission of Canada at the UN**. This was a chance for us to introduce ourselves and share some of the priority issues for the Federation NGO, particularly in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030. This meeting was a continuation of the practice of

the Marthas’ NGO Liaison in building a good relationship with the Permanent Mission.

This year marks the **25th Anniversary of the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO at the UN**, and there was a wonderful, virtual celebration on June 15, ahead of the Federation Leadership Annual Meeting. This celebration included some of the history of the NGO, messages and stories from past representatives, and reflections on the important role the NGO has played at the UN.

Also, later this year, the NGO will also say **farewell to Sister Teresa Kotturan**, as her second term as the NGO Representative comes to an end. We will have an opportunity to celebrate Sister Teresa at an event in New Jersey in October. Sister Teresa has been a remarkably dedicated representative, working tirelessly to promote the priorities and reflect the charism of the Federation at the UN. We share our gratitude for her work and wish her many blessings. Sister Teresa’s term ends in January 2023. The search is now on for a new Representative, and we ask your prayers for a grace-filled process and outcome.

I look forward to sharing with you the important work of the Federation NGO, as we continue to witness to and advocate for justice in our world.

Peace and blessings,

Darlene O’Leary

Martha NGO Liaison/Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry

**“I place trust in God, my creator, in all things;
I love God with all my heart”**

- St. Joan of Arc

Mass For Shut Ins

After almost 3 years, the Martha Associates were once again able to participate in “Mass for Shut Ins” on April 2, 2022. Fr. Bill Burke was the Celebrant, with Pat Ryba as Lector and Mike Finigan providing the music. The Liturgy was for Palm Sunday. It was truly a blessing and a joy to participate at the beginning of Holy Week. (Masses are pretaped)



Mass For Shut Ins
April 2, 2022

“Seven days without prayer makes one weak”

- Macrinda Weideker

**“A humble soul does not trust itself,
but places all its confidence in God”**

- St. Faustina

Celebrating 60 Years Of Consecrated Life

Sr. Claudette Gallant CSM

In June of 2022, nine Sisters of St. Martha were celebrated for their milestone years marking religious life. Sr. Claudette Gallant was one of these nine sisters. You all know Sr. Claudette from her years of dedication to the Martha associate Program. I invited Sr. Claudette to participate in an interview for the SYCAMORE. Of course, she kindly consented! On June 30, 2022, after enjoying some lunch together, Sr. Claudette shared a little of her personal journey with me, and I am privileged to share some of that interview with all of you.

1. Sr. Claudette, will you tell me something about your family when you were growing up?

I was born in New Waterford in 1940 to my parents, Charlie Joe and Helene Gallant. We were 11 children and I was the middle child. There were 6 girls and 5 boys. My Father was a miner. He was very involved with the unions. My Mother was a homemaker. She worked extremely hard to “keep the home fires burning”.

As a large family, it was important that we all shared and helped each other. We “cleaned and cleaned”!

We spoke French at home and went to a french school from grade primary to grade 6. I felt fortunate to be able to speak in both French and English.

2. How did you receive your call to become a sister?

I knew at a young age that there was something within calling me to religious life. I was not sure what it was, but I had to search it out! I needed to discover if the call was authentic, and I needed to respond.

My Mother thought I was too young to enter religious life at first, I was only 18. However, I followed my inner movements and I entered the novitiate at the age of 18.

3. When did you make your final profession of vows?

I entered in 1960 and made my final profession in 1963. It was a time of great transition in the Church and in religious life. Vatican 2 was begun in 1962 and changes began to happen. It was under John the XXIII that Vatican 2 began; it was exciting and I found it gave me new life! There is a whole section in the Vat. 2 document on religious life where we are asked to move forward with the times.

4. What attracted you to the Sisters of St. Martha?

While I was growing up, I was taught by the Sisters of Charity. I did not know the Marthas at this point. All the

Sisters of Charity I knew were teachers. All my sisters at home were teachers too, and I wanted to do something different. I thought I would not become a teacher in the Marthas, but it turns out that I did become a teacher. I taught for 10 years. However, during those years of teaching I became exposed to many social and family problems of my students, and I wanted to be able to help in a different way. It was then that I went to St. Paul's in Ottawa to study Pastoral care of the family. I began working with Parish families and found that I was much better suited for this type of work.

The Church seemed to be alive at this time! There was new life: the RCIA program; and development of a baptismal program; the Christopher Leadership program. “It was great”. These were ways to help people develop themselves. It was a wonderful time and I was blessed to meet so many good people.

5. What can you tell me about the lifestyle of a woman religious?

There is continued yearning for God, a desire to learn, to be educated, to help others and to be present for others.

We are ready to do anything for others. We are kind and always try to be present for others.

We also love life: fun, laughter, music, dancing!!

6. What roles / Ministries have you participated in as a Martha?

- Teaching
- Pastoral work
- Adult Faith
- Spiritual Direction
- Administration of Parishes in Newfoundland, where I was given the opportunity to preside at marriages, Baptisms, funerals, lead Sunday Liturgies, give Homilies and read the Gospel during Mass.
- Served on CSM Leadership 2004-2009
- Involved in social justice committee, in which I continue to be involved
- Participate in Board of Community Cares
- Various missions in the Sisters of St. Martha in the West, East and NFLD

7. Why has the Associate Program been so important to you?

Within the Congregation, I am with other sisters who have a yearning to know more about God. With the associates, I also have the opportunity to journey with other adults who have that same yearning to know God just like I do! It is wonderful to be associated with lay people who wish to express their spiritual desires and are eager to learn more and develop their relationship with God. For myself, that relationship with God always grows when I am out in nature. God always speaks to me through the magnificence of creation; I always find God in nature.

Supplying people, like our associates, with good books and good theology also helps in developing our relationship with God as we journey through life.

8. You have been called prophetic by some people. What do you say to that?

I say that I believe the seed came from my home. My Father was always open to new things. I believe that I was given the gift to want more, expect more out of life...always wanting to read more, experience more. I do not mean this only for myself, but I want to share it with others. Being "prophetic" means never holding something just for one's self, but to share it and to let others know what this great God is and to be open to the mystery which is our God.

I have always loved learning, and learning more!! Learning became part of my spirit. It makes me think of St. Theresa of Avila's quote:

**"One day of self- knowledge is worth
1000 days of prayer"**

9. What are some of your hobbies and interests?

- Reading, reading and reading!!
- Playing cards
- Watching a good movie
- Good conversation
- I love meeting people and hearing their story. This is humbling to me. It also helps in understanding people more.
- Love to walk and swim
- Love to make tea biscuits
- Enjoy having friends visit and share food together

10. What are your continued hopes for our world?

I dearly wish we could all learn that we are one family and that no one person is better than anyone else. And I wish we could all learn to care for each other.

**Our gratitude to Sr. Claudette Gallant for her
generosity in sharing some of her thoughts
on the occasion of her 60th anniversary
in religious life. Congratulations from all
associates Sr. Claudette!!**



Sr. Claudette Gallant CSM

Beyond Retirement: The Call to Service Continues

By Martha Associate, Norma Blinkhorn

After retiring as the Director of the Northside Homemakers Service Society for the past 39 years, Norma Blinkhorn started her role of the **Coordinator of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Antigonish in January 2019**. She is a woman of faith, who is an enthusiastic advocate for youth, social justice, and pastoral care. Together with her husband Harry, daughter Kayla and son-in-law David MacDonald, grand-daughter Ava and expected grand-daughter Amaya they call Sydney Mines Home.

She works part-time to support parish initiatives such as:

1. Mental Health “Bell Let’s Talk conversations breaking down barriers”
2. Social justice initiatives such as corporal works of mercy projects supporting food banks, outdoor cupboards, shelters for women, and community.
3. Other initiatives included coordinating Missions, Youth Rallies and Retreats.

With empty pews and youth no longer attending church, in October 2021 Norma was assigned to the Synodal Team. She was extremely excited and hopeful in these new tasks. As a life-long learner she began her journey by reading the Vatican documents on Synodality, **“Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future”** written in collaboration by Pope Francis, Austen Ivereigh and **“Walking Together” A Primer on the New Synodality** by Moira McQueen. After reading these uplifting and inspiring books, Norma became enthusiastic about the task at hand. Her learning also included watching You-tube Videos on Synodality.

Between October 2021 to June 2022 the following are initiatives that Norma was engaged in:

- Development of virtual and

print resources for parish/group conversations

- Facilitated and developed virtual and in-person conversations with Priests, ministries, parishes, and Martha Associates
- Developed and facilitated **“Come Back to Me with All Your Heart”** Synod Lenten conversations at Holy Family Parish in Sydney Mines, including resources for parish Lenten conversation
- Assisted with the organization of a Mass on the Feast of Pentecost closing the Diocesan phase of the Synod
- Assisted with Youth Ecumenical Interfaith/Listening Conversations
- Organized a concert of song and stories featuring donated talent by renowned local musicians and sharing of stories about mothers and faith, raising \$5,500 for five organizations in our diocese supporting women and children escaping domestic violence.

With humility, Norma is grateful for all the wisdom and support of Sr. Claudette Gallant, Sr. Franklyn Ferguson, Sr. Jovita MacPherson, Sheila O’Handley, Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick,

Father Fabian Ihunegbo, and the Diocesan Synod Team for trusting her in this process.

Norma Blinkhorn,
Coordinator of Youth Ministry
Diocese of Antigonish
Phone: 902 202 2972
Email: norma@dioceseofantigonish.ca

You tube videos for Personal learning or Facilitating Groups on Synodality

1. Synod on Synodality - All You Need to Know, You Tube Rahai, Nov 18, 2021
2. Forming Ourselves in Synodality – You Tube, St. Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
3. Listening – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
4. Discerning and Deciding – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
5. Dialogue –You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
6. Speaking Out- You Tube- St Quivox Church, Nov 4, 2021
7. Companions on a journey – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
8. Authority and Participation – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
9. Sharing Responsibility – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021
10. Celebration – You Tube, St Quivox Church, Nov 5, 2021



Norma and Harry Blinkhorn with Mary Hall

Martha Associate Retreat

“Behold, I Am Doing Something New.....Do you not perceive it?”

Isaiah 43:19

A beautiful virtual retreat was held at the Martha Resource Centre in Antigonish, NS on Saturday, September 18, 2021. Sr. Theresa Parker CSM was our Retreat leader and speaker for the 4 hour event. Approximately 23 Associates, from both Western and Eastern Canada, and several Marthas joined us via ZOOM, with a group of 8 Associates and 2 Marthas gathered at St. Clare's Convent in Sydney Mines. As well, 8 Associates, 3 Marthas and 1 Collaborator were gathered in person at the Martha Resource Centre. Many of the Sisters of St. Martha were able to participate via a youtube link, and they were able to watch from Martha Place. It was extremely special that both the East and West could gather at the same time.

Our Retreat opened with a welcome from Sr. Brendalee Boisvert CSM, Congregation Leader of the Sisters of St. Martha. This was followed by a beautiful opening hymn, **“Deep Within”** sung and played by Mike Finigan of the Sydney Associates.

Sr. Theresa then began her presentations. After each presentation, everyone was invited into a time of personal reflection, followed by a time of sharing in a small group and finally in the larger group.

Sr. Theresa began each reflection with a scripture passage:

- **“Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24)**
- **“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world” (John 11:27)**

Sr. Theresa provided us with much to reflect upon! She opened with a few comments on the word **“Behold”**. It appears 1298 times in Scripture. It calls us to pay attention, to see, to perceive, to understand. It is like being given an “alert” by God!

Some other golden nuggets that Sr. Theresa spoke:

- Somehow, God is with us in all things, no matter what.
- God is love; 1 John tells us that God loved us first.
- We need to let things go to have them renewed sometimes.
- God loves us as we are, not as we think we should be.
- **“There is never a shortage of reasons to stay on the balcony while life passes me by” (Pope Francis)**

Our day concluded with gratitude and with a lovely wordle, a compilation of what the participants heard, or how they were feeling at the end of our day together.

Finally, we concluded our time together with a wonderful closing hymn, **“City of God”**, sung and played by Mike Finigan.

It was a blessed day for sure!!



Sr. Theresa Parker and Julia Townsend
Sept. 18, 2021

and Associates



"Behold, I am doing Something New..."

September 18, 2021



**Thank you for
sharing!**

God Bless.



Do you not perceive it?" - Isaiah 43:19

Martha Retreat Centre Society

Creating Space for the Future, a reflective journal compiled by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious has been a very inspirational reading for me each day.

Martha Retreat Centre is in a transformational time. Following the Sisters return to Antigonish in July 2019 the Centre has been focused on building the future of the Centre in our Lethbridge community. The physical presence of the Sisters is dearly missed. Their continued connection is a blessing of service as the work through Gospel Hospitality reaches others. Two Sisters serve as Directors on the Board and the Sisters gather and serve as a Prayer Team for the Centre.

Navigating through change comes with challenges that evolve into opportunities. Developing the Grounds at Martha Retreat Centre has added an additional room of ministry, enjoyment, and appreciation. Inviting guests to the grounds increased in significance as government restrictions limited the number of people that could enter the building.

Ten permanent benches were placed strategically around the grounds, providing places for people to sit, visit, or reflect all while enjoying the beauty of nature surrounding them. The benches are all made of 175 lbs of recycled plastic, keeping true to caring for our environment. In the summer of 2021, we started a Peace At Lunch (P.A.L.) program. Guests are invited to pre-order a homemade lunch to be enjoyed on the ground's individually or with a group of friends. In 2021, we had 160 people join us for lunch, with 48 new connections to the Centre. 2022 is our second year to host P.A.L., as of June 20 we have sold 139 lunches. This year we invited individuals and businesses to sponsor the program, with 4 P.A.L. events sponsored.

Music on the Grounds began with The Bridge Brass Quintet playing in July 2021. This grew into 4 events for our second year. June 17, we hosted Chris Hartman and Jim Robinson; July 18 – The New Testaments; August 21 – The Bridge Brass Quintet; with a special added event during the Associates Retreat for September 24 – Craig Ginn. Sponsors for these events, along with some Silent Auction fun will help the Centre with their fundraising goals.



Music on the Grounds – June 18, 2022
Featured from left to right
St Martha Associates: Larry Spiess, Irene Tosczak and Harry Mueller, Kathy Gillis, Diana Sim (Journeyer);
Musicians: Jim Robinson and Chris Hartman



The addition of the Labyrinth has been utilized by over 400 people coming to the Grounds to journey through with the intention of Release, Receive, Return. It brings me pure joy to look out the window and see a pair or a group of people walking through the Labyrinth. Guests have included: University classes, groups of special programs for youth and women; grade school teachers and administrators; and the Labyrinth has been incorporated into some of the regular programs offered at the Centre.

The Martha Retreat Centre reaches into the future through the hearts of those who participate in the Life of the Centre. Together, ministry continues with the intention of impacting lives through the fullness of hope that is within reach through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Diana Simm
Executive Director, Martha Retreat Centre
Lethbridge, Alberta

New Martha Associates Welcomed

It is with great delight that we received two new Martha Associates!

Sylvia Chiasson has journeyed with the Glace Bay, as well as the Sydney group. She was received on November 21, 2021.

Dale Romeo has journeyed with the Sydney Mines group. He was received on April 12, 2022.

We congratulate and welcome Sylvia and Dale. May your spiritual journeys continue to grow and flourish as you honor your baptismal commitments and live with the joy of Gospel Hospitality.



Sr. Josephine MacLellan, Sylvia Chiasson,
Sr. Jovita MacPherson
November 21, 2022



Sr. Franklyn Ferguson, Dale Romeo, Sr. Claudette Gallant
April 12, 2022

**“Yesterday I was clever so I wanted to change the world;
today I am wise so I am changing myself”**

- Rumi

Sydney / Glace Bay Martha Associates Year End 2021-22

We did alright this year past. We only missed one meeting because of Covid. And none because of bad weather! It was a good year and once again, among all the people to thank for what they do, we thank the folks at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Sydney for offering us a space to meet. We've been there a few years now and it's as comfortable as an old shoe.

So, beginning at the beginning, we met in October (after the wonderful September retreat at Martha Place and Sr. Theresa Parker's talk). We had a look at The Sycamore and our coordinator Julia Townsend's inspiring remarks and challenging questions about the times we live in. We noted our own Julie Dzaich's write up about her garden. (Speaking to Julie later on that, I learned some great tips about growing garlic.) We also switched our meeting times from Wednesday evenings to Sunday afternoons for the whole year. We read some letters too, from the book of letters – **"You Touched My Heart"** - that the various groups of Martha Associates put together for the Marthas in appreciation for all that the Sisters of St. Martha do and have been to us.

In November, we were excited to receive Sylvia into the Martha Associates. Sylvia had been journeying with us and with the Glace Bay group for a while and found herself ready to take the leap. We had a great welcoming and celebration for her and are very happy to have her with us.

In December, we got together at Bethel for a Christmas feast and carol singing... just before Covid clamped down on Nova Scotia again. And we agreed to give our social justice collection to Sr. Jovita MacPherson's ministry in Sydney. Then, our January meeting was cancelled due to Covid. And in February, we watched some short, informative videos on The Synod. And a good discussion followed.

In March we began the practice of stating the Mi'kmaq Land Acknowledgement. We made a donation from our social justice fund to the people of Ukraine. And Julia revisited Sr. Theresa Parker's talk from the September retreat for those of us who might have missed it, and because it seemed relevant in these uncertain times.

In April, we hosted Mass for Shut-Ins on TV, and back at Bethel with Easter approaching we honoured Holy Week with a reading of The Way of the Cross, followed by reflection and discussion. Then in May, The Month of Mary, Terry Campbell led The Rosary and then Julia did a reflection on the flight of Mary, Joseph and Jesus from Herod and Bethlehem into Egypt, from Mary's perspective, bearing in mind how this scenario is so often played out daily in the world today. A discussion followed with some insightful thoughts.

At last, we met for our June season-ending dinner, this time in Keranna on the Bras D'Or Lakes, the Marthas' retreat house. Couldn't have been a better day weather-wise! The Marthas gave us a feast they put together themselves. And before we ate we paused for prayer and small group reflection on the theme of what we might have experienced at one particular point in our lives that sparked our faith. (At first I didn't think I would have much to offer, but soon found I had plenty and could have forgotten all about supper!) And we also said goodbye, as the Sydney / Glace Bay group to Sr. Jovita who had been with us for two years. She left Sydney to move into Antigonish to work at St. F.X. University with Wellsprings. We loved having Sr. Jovita with us and will miss her charm, enthusiasm, energy and wit. We'll miss you, Sr. Jovita, but our loss is somebody else's gain and we know you will bring life overflowing to your new position.

Anyway, you know what they say, even a rainy day at Keranna is better than a sunny one in Sydney. Well. They say that about Mira, but as we sat there on the deck at the Keranna house, I thought, yes, it applies there as well. What a way to end a great season!

Have a blessed summer, everyone! Enjoy!
Mike Finigan. Sydney/Glace Bay Associates.



Sisters of St. Martha with Sydney/Glace Bay Associates
June 2022



Mary MacKinnon, Michelle Finigan,
Michael Finigan
June 2022



Sr. Josephine MacLellan



Sydney and Glace Bay Group, Keranna, 2022

“To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it”

- St. Theresa of Calcutta

Sydney Mines Associates Year End Report, June 2022

We have been very fortunate to have met several times over the last number of months, despite the ever present threat of the covid virus. The following is a summary of our gatherings from 2021 until the present.

In September of 2021, we participated in an online retreat with Sr. Theresa Parker CSM. Sr. Theresa Spoke about hope as we move forward, accepting changes in our lives. As an example, she highlighted the Sisters' move from Bethany to Martha Place. Although the Sisters were saddened to leave their Motherhouse, they also felt a sense of newness and hope as they settled into their new home.

In October, many associates, along with Sr. Claudette and Sr. Franklyn, were able to travel to Antigonish and visit Martha Place and to explore the new Centennial Garden built on the grounds of the former Motherhouse, Bethany. The garden is magnificent! We were especially touched to see so many pieces of the Motherhouse and Bethany Chapel incorporated into the garden design. We ended our day with a festive meal.

Our November gathering was cancelled.

Sr. Jovita MacPherson visited with us in December and shared some stories about her work with the Martha Street Ministry. She impressed on us the importance of simply remembering to be kind to others who are marginalized and need help. There are so many difficulties that may arise in families from situations such as alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence. We must remember that all are God's children and to do what we can to help.

January was also cancelled.

In February, Norma Blinkhorn presented some information on the Synod. She provided us with some basic understanding of what a Synod is and why it was called at this time.

Norma continued her presentation in March concerning the Synod. This is a special journey for the Church. We must acknowledge that the Institutional Church has caused much pain and we need to move ahead with changes. Much discussion followed and Norma encouraged us all to participate in our Church meetings on the Synod in order that all voice may be heard.

In April, we welcomed the Martha Associate Director, Julia Townsend. After some discussion on Charism and the associate movement, we celebrated the reception of Dale Romeo as our newest Martha Associate. Julia also announced that our Martha associate retreat was going forward in person this year. Our guest speaker for the retreat is Moira McQueen. She will be speaking on aspects of the upcoming Synod in Rome, 2023. The Retreat is

scheduled for Saturday, September 10, 2022.

In May, we welcomed some new faces to our group, Brian and Nancy Joseph, who have been invited to "Come and See" what the Associates are all about. We had some reflective time and discussion on the war in Ukraine. We were reminded that until the power of love overcomes the love of power, there will be no peace in our world!! How sad, yet true!!

We shared a delicious potluck meal hosted by Norma and Harry Blinkhorn to mark the start of our summer break. We shared stories and celebrated Sr. Claudette Gallant's 60th anniversary as a Sister of St. Martha. It was a joyful and blessed evening!

Blessings for a safe and happy summer,

Brenda Blinkhorn and Mary Hall
Sydney Mines Associates



Sydney Mines Associates
April 12, 2022

Trenton Associate Group 2022

After riding the covid rollercoaster for the last couple of years, we were able to resume in-person meetings at long last in February 2022.

The theme for that meeting was: **“Embracing Change”**. Scripture readings were from the letter of St. Paul telling us not to be anxious about anything, but by prayer, to present our requests to God. Our Gospel reading from Matthew centers on Jesus telling us to **“Seek and you will find, ask and it shall be given to you”**. The fruit of our reflection time was that each day holds a surprise, and we should embrace it.

The theme of our March meeting was **“Beginning Again”**. The parable of the prodigal son was chosen for our reflection. During our gathering, we also discussed the upcoming Martha associate retreat which will center on the “Synod on Synodality” with Dr. Moira McQueen as our guest speaker. Our particular focus was on our Baptismal call, transparency and undaunted hope. We ended our meeting with a reading of Pope Francis’s poem, **“Hope”** from his book **“Let Us Dream”**.

In April, we had a visit from Julia Townsend, Director Martha Associates. Julia’s enthusiasm, hard work, commitment and spirituality are certainly an inspiration to us all. The group shared an excellent discussion around the upcoming Martha associate retreat, the synod, and the effects of covid. We also had an important discussion on how we keep the Martha charism alive; and where do we see ourselves as associates, moving into the future.

We chose a theme of **“Gratitude”** for our closing meeting in May. Our scriptures spoke about gratitude and rejoicing each day. We reflected on coming before God in gratitude and humility. We closed with a prayer: **“A Prayer of Gratitude for the Morning”**. It was very powerful and we

all felt and understood the need to pray privately and regularly during our days.

All meetings were followed by a lovely lunch and time spent in fellowship with each other.

At each meeting, we gave thanks to our God for bringing us back together once again and to be able to share with each other in person. We have also been very blessed that Sr. Mary MacMahon has been able to join us at some of our meetings.

Overall, it has been a wonderful year, and we are most grateful for our time together!

May God’s blessings and the peace of Christ be with all the Sisters of St. Martha and our Associates.

With blessings,

Gary Rankin
Trenton Associate Coordinator



Trenton Associates with Sr. Mary MacMahon
April 2022

“ No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others.”

- Pope Francis

Lethbridge Martha Associates

Martha Retreat Centre

The obstacles in our path are not blocking us they are redirecting us. Their purpose is not to interfere with our happiness; it is to point us toward new routes to our happiness, new possibilities, new doorways.

When I read this quote, by Barbara de Angelis, I could see parallels with this past year. It invited me to pause and reflect on the obstacles and blocks our associate group experienced. However, it also reminded me that our happiness and needs as God's people required nourishment and possibilities to gather in faith.

COVID continued to trump most of the year and limited the engagements we could have in person. However, it redirected us into options to gather using a 'hybrid' model. Many in our group were feeling 'zoomed' out, yet desired to get together. Others wished to get together, however, did not feel safe enough to meet in person. No one wanted to allow COVID restrictions to interfere, any more than necessary, with our happiness and need to be together. Below is a snap shot of what our 2021-2022 associate year looked like.

In October we used our hybrid model. About half of us gathered at the Martha Retreat Centre and half joined in by Zoom. The focus of this session was to catch up to each other and share stories. There was laughter and tears as everyone spoke to how the past 18 months with COVID was impacting our lives. Although, the obstacles were shared the unexpected richness of new found paths and opened doorways outweighed them. Everyone shared how important it was to be together. Shortly after this meeting another COVID wave hit Alberta and restrictions were back in place. With that, the decision was made to pause until the new year, hopeful that we would be able to gather again.

Unfortunately, in the 2022 new year not much had changed with COVID restrictions so we decided to only hold 2 hybrid sessions. In January Father Tim Boyle lead us through an engaging reflection from scripture on, The New Creation a new year... a new beginning and The Wedding Feast "Blessed are those called to the Wedding Banquet of the Lord". Much curiosity and questions were raised followed by great dialogue and sharing. We are so grateful for Father Tim's spiritual leadership and engagement with our associate group.

In March we had a very special Zoom session with our eastern associates. Sister Marion Sheridan graciously shared the role and purpose of the United Nations (UN). In light of the war in Ukraine we had many questions about why the UN could not step in to stop the aggression. She provided a rich and clear overview of the role of the UN in the world and specifically, with the war in Ukraine. She reminded us that as Marthas and Martha associates we have, "the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through all of us all the time. That gives us hope." What a blessing she has been to the world through this missionary work and we were so grateful she made time to be with us.

Spring offered new life and new hope. COVID restrictions were lifted and we could gather in person again. It was very exciting to plan for Julia Townsend to come out west to join us in person. We held our May session at the Martha Retreat Centre with 11 associates, 3 journeymen, one person who is exploring to journey and 2 on Zoom. Our largest gathering in 2 years! It was so exciting to be together, hug, catch up and hear updates from Julia. We had an amazing discussion on what it means to be an associate and how we see ourselves continuing on this faith journey together. We continue to miss our loving Sisters, however, we now see the opportunity and need to transform our purpose and mission in gospel hospitality without the Sisters physical presence. COVID has delayed this process, however, possibilities and doorways are beginning to show themselves. We hope to explore this more deeply when we begin our faith sharing sessions this fall.

The Holy Spirit fills our hearts and gives us faith to move forward during these transformative times creating space for the future associate movement. "Nothing will be impossible with God." Luke 1

Yours in undaunted hope and love,

Kathy Gillis



Caroline Martin, Kathy Gillis, Annella Wehlage
Lethbridge, Alberta

**“Few souls understand
what God would effect in
them if they should give
themselves entirely into
God’s hands and allow
God’s grace to act”**

- St. Ignatius of Loyola



Western Associates
May 19, 2022





A Moment To Remember

Let us remember our Associates, family members and friends
who have died and are very much present to us.

We hold them in our hearts and remember how they have been
a pocket of hope for us through their beliefs, smiles, attitudes and presence.

A Gentle Blessing

May your heart be blessed with gentleness and peace
As you journey on your way.

May your heart accept with grace,
All the love and blessings Trinity weaves within and around you.

May you be blessed with the humble knowledge
That you do faithfully share God's love with all.

May you be blessed with continued joy,
Knowing that this love you share is also gratefully returned to you.

And....may your very being smile....
While knowing "Hearts that love are never far away"

-Anonymous-

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The Martha Website is: www.themarthas.com

Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community
please email material to Julia Townsend at julia.townsend@themarthas.com

Submitted items may appear on the website or in our newsletter.
Please help keep our new website current.