

# Our Life as Mission

NEWS FROM MARTHA  
LEADERSHIP TEAM

*"Standing together in undaunted hope"*



## BETHANY CENTENNIAL GARDEN

Despite the delays experienced due to the pandemic, we are still relatively on track to open this sacred and beautiful space on September 21<sup>st</sup> of 2021, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our arrival on this property.



Over the last couple of months, over 200 trees, 100 bushes, ornamental grasses, and perennial flowers were planted in the garden. The accolade elms line one side of Marian Drive and will grow up to be very stately. A little grove of spruce and pine was created beside a new walkway not far from the gazebo. The 'Autumn Blaze' maples are further in, behind the fence. The white birch, flowering crabs, along with the columnar oak and many other will come to view when the fence comes down.

Over the summer months we will see more work being done on the landscaping. Please be aware that the fencing will remain in place throughout the summer, until the construction of the reflective pool around the steeple is complete.

There will be parking available at the entrance to the Garden once it is open.

## BETHANY PROPERTY INFORMATION

The 2018 move to Martha Place and Mary's Court at Parkland Antigonish and the deconstruction of Bethany, the former Motherhouse, were just two parts of a major transition for the Congregation and this property. Bethany Property remains a sacred place of peace and prayer for our Congregation. We welcome all who wish to walk, pray, and connect with creation. We ask that you respect the land, the creatures, the plants, and the people you encounter.



### PARKING

Parking for staff at Mount Carmel Administration Centre is in front of the building, parking for visitors to Mount Carmel is located at the top of the circle.

Parking for visitors to the Bethany Resource Centre, St. Theresa's Garden, woodland trails, or those wishing to walk the property is located next to the Bethany Resource Centre. Signage will be in place soon. Please do not park along the roadways.

### ROADS

When you drive onto the property, you are turning onto the main road - **Marian Drive** - that leads to Mount Carmel Administration Centre, Bethany Resource Centre, and Marian Community, as well as St. Theresa's Garden, the Contemplative Trail, and the Martha New Growers gardens. The road that leads to the Sisters of St. Martha Cemetery and the Jerome Sullivan Centre: Facilities Management is now named **Memorial Lane**. It also serves as a connector for Sisters living at Parkland with the rest of the property.

### NEW ADDRESS

Sisters of St. Martha  
Mount Carmel Administration Centre  
75 Marian Drive  
Antigonish B2G 2G6

### PHONE

General Administration: **902-863-3113**.  
To reach an individual Sister at Parkland Antigonish, please call **902-735-8900**.



### WALKING

The main activity on this beautiful property is walking. Many of our sisters walk daily, some aided by walkers, canes or walking sticks. We welcome anyone who wishes to do the same and are happy to see so many do just that. Some people who are walking may not have the ability to hear cars, please pay attention to them and adhere to the **speed limit of 25km/hr**.

Dog walkers are asked to have their **dogs leashed at all times**, and that you clean up after your pet.

*Please pay attention to signage on the property!*

Sisters of St. Martha and 20 other religious congregations have signed an open letter regarding residential schools and reconciliation written by Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM) and sent to Archbishop Gagnon and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). We pray for a shared spirit of compassion and openness as we face this difficult history and walk the path of right relations.

28<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The Most Rev. Richard Gagnon  
President  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops  
2500 Don Reid Drive  
Ottawa, ON K1H 2J2

Your Grace,

The discovery of hundreds of human remains at the sites of former Indian Residential Schools run by Catholic institutions in Kamloops, BC and Cowessess SK, is devastating. Indigenous communities, Catholics, and Canadians at large are calling for a renewed response from our Church to atone for its role in the Indian Residential School System.

As Catholics in Canada, our communities are all actively engaged in the reconciliation process. Those involved directly in residential schools have made individual apologies which has helped with some healing for Indigenous communities. We also recognise that many initiatives have been undertaken in dioceses across Canada.

All of us, including our Indigenous partners and members, agree that more is needed. This is new moment in which to acknowledge that the Church as a whole as well as the country as a whole were complicit in this cultural genocide by what we did and what we failed to do.

Catholics across Canada are looking for clear, courageous leadership from our leaders in the Catholic Church. As Catholics invested in the reconciliation process we continue to see as vital next steps that you:

- Invite the Holy Father, as the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church, to come and deliver a formal apology in person.
- Disclose all outstanding records and information about the running of residential schools.
- Develop and fund a national, Indigenous-led, Catholic reconciliation plan which includes addressing intergenerational trauma, supporting survivors, the reclamation of Indigenous language and culture, educational and awareness-raising materials to decolonize our minds and hearts, and other programs essential to the healing process.

There is a new collective consciousness about the nature of the colonialism, racism, and abuse of the residential school system. This awareness demands a renewed, collective response from our church that builds on the work each of us has done with our own partners. This is a *kairos* moment, and we are prepared to answer the call. Let us do this work together in the name of our faith. Yours sincerely,

~Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM)

JEM is a collaboration of religious communities and partners using their resources to promote caring for Creation and living within planetary limits.

[jemcanada@outlook.com](mailto:jemcanada@outlook.com)



The letter was delivered Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup> to the Rev. Richard Gagnon, President of the CCCB.

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, Joint Ecological Ministry also issued a press release regarding the open letter to CCCB. It is shared on the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph website. Below are two excerpts from this press release:

Father Erik Oland, Provincial of the Jesuits of Canada, said:

*“Thousands of Indigenous children have made their journey to their Creator in the spirit world. In this tragic and propitious moment, they are now speaking to us from their anonymous graves. Are we listening? Will we heed their voices? Apology is a risk, opening archives is a risk, committing to develop programs is a risk, but more importantly, these are essential steps on the path to true healing and right relations.”*

His words echo the sentiments expressed by Sister Margo Ritchie, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. In her words:

*“We are experiencing the searing grace of a new collective consciousness among all of us as a Catholic community. There is no doubt that some choices have been made to respond to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Report. And yet... and now, we are called into the depths of a reconciliation that can give space for a new future of healed relationship.”*

This is a screenshot of a website banner. At the top left is the logo for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada, featuring a stylized white flame or leaf above the text. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for Home, About, Blog, How to Join, Ministries, Contact, and Donate. Below the navigation is the date 'JULY 5, 2021'. The main title of the banner is 'A Call for Clear and Courageous Leadership - Developing a National Catholic Reconciliation Plan', written in a large, white, serif font against a dark green background.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY



Created by Sister Dorothy Moore

Summer has begun, and with it comes some sense of relief and hope. We feel an opening as we emerge from pandemic restrictions, but a weariness in what has been such a time of hardship for so many.

In our justice and creation care work, the past few months have seen reasons for hope, but also deep sorrow. The sorrow is deepest in facing the horrific discovery of the remains of Indigenous children at former residential schools. How can we honour these young lives lost, families shattered, cultures brutalized, recognizing that we are part of a Church that did this? We have made the work of Reconciliation and Right Relations a central focus of our ministry. We work to educate ourselves

and to face the truth, to listen and build friendships, and to advocate for programs and policies that will make a difference, with the guidance of Mi'kmaw communities locally and Indigenous leaders nationally.

We hope that we can be part of the change needed to build new relationships and plant new seeds of hope and compassion, living toward the flourishing of our communities and creation. We are grateful for your prayers and support as we walk on this path together.

Blessings,

*Darlene O'Leary, Coordinator,  
Martha Justice Ministry*



## BILL C-15

Following years of effort, a bill legislating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is now law in Canada.

The Sisters of St. Martha, through the UN Federation NGO Liaison, pushed for years for UNDRIP to be legislated and implemented. UNDRIP was adopted by the UN Security Council in 2007, with Canada initially opposing it. Following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Final Report and Calls to Action, Canada adopted UNDRIP in 2015.

Faith communities pushed hard to make sure that Bill C-15 did not get blocked in the Senate, as happened in 2019 with MP Romeo Saganash's private member's bill. Campaigns and educational webinars took place through the winter and spring to build support for the bill.



These involved groups like Faith in the Declaration, Joint Ecological Ministry, Kairos, and others, and were guided by Indigenous leaders, including Romeo Saganash, former TRC Chairs, Hon. Murry Sinclair and Dr. Marie Wilson, UNDRIP contributor Chief Wilton Littlechild, and others.

An open letter signed by these and other Indigenous leaders, states:

*"This bill ... is a unique opportunity to advance our rights and confront the harms to our people created by colonialism, racism and other forms of discrimination. This is what we fought for."*

We celebrate the passing of this legislation and hope it fulfils the needed implementation of Indigenous rights in Canada.





*Embracing Our Neighbour  
and Our Common Home*

## NEW COLLABORATION: JOINT ECOLOGICAL MINISTRY (JEM)

This spring, we joined with Joint Ecological Ministry (JEM) in ongoing efforts to raise awareness and encourage advocacy on the important topic of Indigenous rights.

We held two *Call to Allyship* webinars, the first featuring Fr. Daryold Winkler, an Ojibway priest from Ottawa, Canadian Religious Conference's (CRC) Alain Ambeault and Sabrina di Mateo, and Anglican Bishop Riscylla Shaw. The first *Call to Allyship* webinar heard from Fr. Daryold Winkler, who shared his own experiences of racism and internalized racism. It also included the efforts the CRC has made in working toward reconciliation and heard from Anglican Bishop Shaw about the Anglican Church's extensive work at restructuring in response to the TRC Calls to Action.

The second webinar focused on mobilizing religious congregations to support Bill C-15. I had an opportunity, along with Joe Gunn of Centre Oblat in Ottawa, to meet with Senator Mary Coyle to discuss the study of Bill C-15 in the Senate. We thank Senator Mary Coyle for being a strong advocate for legislating UNDRIP.



## MARTHA JUSTICE MINISTRY MEETING WITH MP

In June, Martha Justice Ministry Core Group members had a meeting with MP Sean Fraser to discuss issues of concern.

These included progress regarding the Mi'kmaw fishery and Bill C-15, concerns about the Goldboro LNG project and possible social, economic, and environmental impacts, ongoing calls to strengthen the mandate of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, and federal support for a basic income. We appreciate the openness of MP Fraser to meeting and talking with us about these and other important issues.





## GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT ATLANTIC ROUNDTABLE

**In May, Darlene O’Leary, Martha Justice Coordinator joined in the first Global Catholic Climate Movement Atlantic Roundtable meeting.**

This was an opportunity to share in reflection and learn about what is happening in Atlantic Canada in the work of climate justice and creation care. The Global Catholic Climate Movement is an international network created in response to Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* and the Paris Climate Agreement. The network includes over 650 Catholic organizations around the world.

GCCM Canada’s Atlantic Roundtable will meet again in the fall. We hope to build collaborative efforts to share in education and advocacy, including around the Season of Creation, the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform, and the fall UN Biodiversity Conference and Conference of the Parties (COP) 26.



Learn more @ <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/>





## GOLDBORO LNG LETTER

In May, Martha Justice Ministry sent a letter to MP Sean Fraser regarding the possible application for funding from the federal government to support the Goldboro LNG project. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pieridae Energy announced that it would not be proceeding with the project. We were happy to join our voices with the significant campaigns from the Council of Canadians, Responsible Energy Action Antigonish, and Mi'kmaw grassroots women that raised awareness about the potential damaging social, economic, and environmental impacts of this project.

May 11, 2021

Dear Mr. Fraser,

On behalf of Martha Justice Ministry, Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish, I want to share with you our concerns about plans for the Goldboro LNG project in Guysborough County and the possible financial contribution of up to \$1 billion dollars to this project by the federal government.

We share the concerns of environmental groups and Mi'kmaw grassroots women about the risks involved with this project. First, while less polluting than coal or oil, liquid natural gas (LNG) still contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and exacerbates the climate crisis. We believe that the federal government should be supporting projects that reduce GHG emissions, as Canada has committed to doing through the Paris Accord and through the recent legislation on GHG emissions reduction targets, Bill C-12.

The Goldboro LNG project has been under discussion for many years, and in that process local and national groups have raised concerns about its social, economic, and environmental impacts. Following on campaigns by the Council of Canadians and statements from grassroots Mi'kmaw grandmothers, our letter outlines the risks involved in this project and points to the more beneficial use for federal funds in the region.



## GOLDBORO LNG LETTER *continued*

Further, the Goldboro LNG project has highly questionable viability. There are a number of barriers to even getting this project off the ground, and a number of reasons why providing financial support to this project is a poor use of Canadian tax dollars, as highlighted by the Council of Canadians, among others. There are other ways to support the community and region that would have better immediate and long-term impacts socially, economically, and environmentally.

Finally, I am sure you know of the concerns being raised by Mi'kmaw grassroots women about the development of a "man camp" to work on this project, potentially housing up to 5000 construction workers. While Peiridae Energy has claimed that Mi'kmaw communities will benefit from this project, Mi'kmaw grassroots women are raising significant concerns about a lack of consultation and the potential for violence against Indigenous women that could result. There is clear evidence that "man camps" in other locations have been associated with violence against women and increased trafficking of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

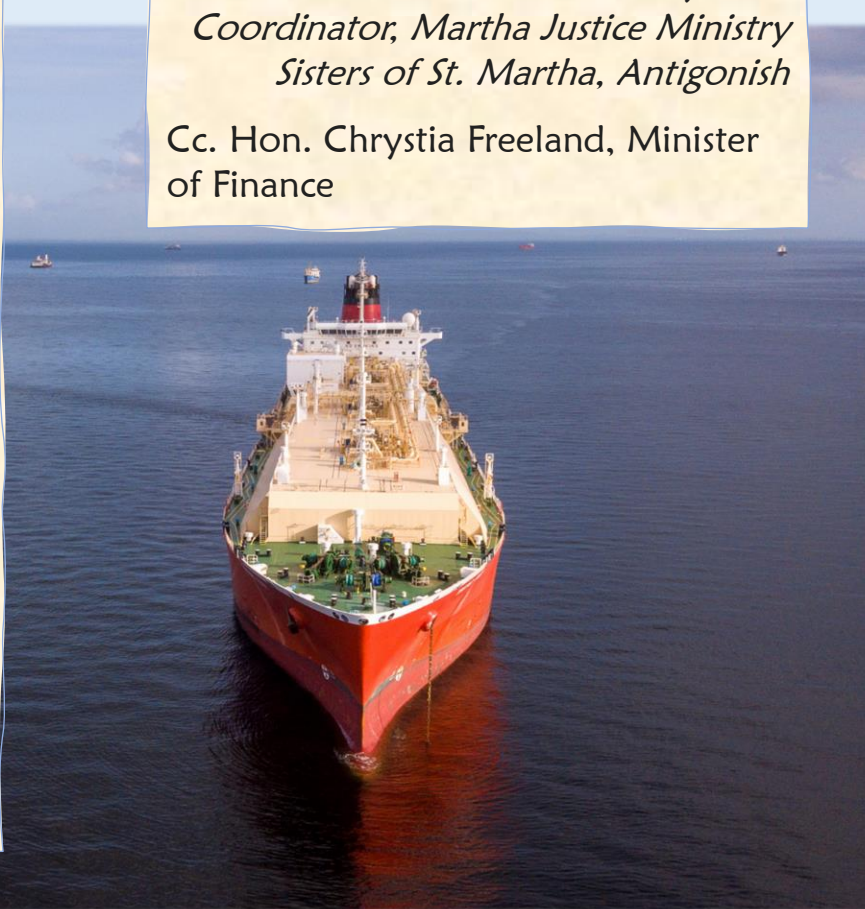
We hope that the federal government is not led by the promise of short-term financial benefits from this project, a promise that must be challenged, at the cost of the long-term economic, social, and environmental well-being of this region and our planet.

We hope that you will give these concerns a great deal of consideration. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely,

*Darlene O'Leary, PhD  
Coordinator, Martha Justice Ministry  
Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish*

Cc. Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister  
of Finance



Sister Catherine Ann MacGillivray manages the Spiritual and Religious Care Department in Saint Martha's Regional Hospital in Antigonish. This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her ministry there yet her enthusiasm and passion for the job do not seem to have diminished with time.

Spiritual and Religious Care Department at St. Martha's Hospital consists of 5 members and works as a team to provide the best care possible. They respond to the needs of patients, staff and members of the community. They accompany patients as they go through serious illness and sometimes death, offering emotional and spiritual support, and sometimes also helping to access financial assistance. If necessary, they coordinate religious services that meet the needs of patients such as contacting their clergy person, helping to respond to sacramental needs, and the ministry of prayer. Their services are directed at people of all faiths or no faith, the poor and the marginalized.



Sister Catherine Ann MacGillivray

The needs of patients vary, and the pandemic brought its own set of complications such as 'no visitor' periods and strict health protocols. The Department had to adapt, the hospital community sacrificed time and space, while keeping the initial focus in mind: providing the best care possible. Sr. Catherine Ann recalls many instances when she provided updates outside in the parking lot to family members who were not allowed inside the hospital; she learnt to FaceTime to help an elderly patient connect with her family on a daily basis. During the pandemic, she has been available even more than before to patients and their families. The main challenge has been to find a balanced approach to life when the demand is so great as she finds it impossible to turn her face away when somebody needs her help.

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*"Those who benefit are the ones that we meet, whether it is in patients' rooms, cafeteria, in the hallways... and we try to greet people with kindness and the respect that they deserve. And in meeting rooms, where patients' rounds are held or at other meetings when issues are discussed, we often shed light on the areas that need to be looked at. So, it's a matter of justice."*

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When entering a patient's room, Sr. Catherine Ann focuses completely on the person, her mind open and without judgement, ready to hear the individual needs and to respond to the situation in front of her. Sometimes it's a prayer, other times a serious talk, but it might just be as simple as providing a radio for a patient to distract their mind from their ailment or bringing someone a newspaper and chit-chatting.

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*"Sometimes the last thing I do is pray with somebody. Even if it is the most religious person on the face of the Earth or a Sister. Only if I absolutely know that prayer is what they want at that moment, I will do it."*

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Saint Martha's regional Hospital in Antigonish, NS

Sr. Catherine Ann was educated in Clinical Pastoral Care and has years of hands-on experience. She credits her predecessors in the Department of Spiritual and Religious Care, Sr. Joan Fultz and Sr. Peter Claver McNear, as well as another wisdom figure, Sr. Peggy MacFarlane, with tremendous influence on her career. These mentors taught her by word and example and provided support without judgement, helping to build her skills as a Spiritual caregiver. She observed, for example, Sr. Peter Claver practicing ‘corridor ministry’ – on her way from and to work she would stop and speak to every person that she passed on the way. Sr. Catherine Ann strongly believes in building trust and community spirit. She too is a people person, accessible and accepting. She wants to get to know people so that when times get tough, she is not just a name on a piece of paper for them, but a living, breathing person that they know they can approach. Confidentiality of information is held sacred in her heart, and it is the responsibility of the Department to safeguard it.

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*“Part of building a community and my responsibility is going day to day and just praying that you speak to who needs to be spoken to.”*

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Sr. Catherine Ann is supporting hospital staff in many ways and relies on their help too. No one is working in isolation, especially during the pandemic, which has been difficult for everyone in the hospital community. Being one person with a small team, she relies on good communication with nursing staff to know which patients need her attention right away on any given day.

But her role in the hospital community is much more than that. Over the last number of years, she found herself many times being an advocate for patients, especially seniors. The numerous letters she writes shed light on a particular situation of a patient, providing a more holistic view for the decision-makers.

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*“I’m not afraid to speak up and I’m not afraid to listen and learn either, because sometimes I may not have the whole picture.”*

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She feels her team is needed the most when people feel powerless. She goes by her mentor’s saying: “All you are doing is helping people to access the strength they have within”. Empowering people is an important skill she practices and hopes to teach others. Elderly are especially vulnerable in our society and need to be given a voice.

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*“When you look at all aspects of a person’s life, that makes it complete. You have to consider how they feel, not just physically but emotionally.”*

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By building relationships with patients, Sr. Catherine Ann learns about aspects of their life that may not pertain to their physical assessment yet are vital for their wellbeing and proper care. Advocating for patients and securing resources are all part of her way of working for justice in the world. This belongs to the main mission of the Sisters of St. Martha: “to hear, embrace and respond to the cry for Gospel Hospitality.”

A native of Antigonish, Sr. Catherine Ann was raised to share what she has and who she is and to help people whenever she can. Naturally, her spirit fits that of the Marthas.

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*I learnt hospitality at an early age, my parents would say things to me like “trust in prayer”, “don’t judge”, “be kind”, “be polite”, “be respectful”. When I entered the Congregation, the charism of the Marthas was not that different from the values of my own family. Faith and hospitality were important and being there for people when they needed”.*

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Place of Peace Garden, adjacent to the hospital parking lot, is also a responsibility of the Spiritual Care Department and an integral part of supporting people spiritually and physically.

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*“The call to Gospel Hospitality has called me to the bedside of the dying, to supporting the grieving, to advocating for the voiceless, to helping people access resources such as food or presiding at a burial service, to sitting with somebody when they’re grieving, visiting the home of people after sudden, tragic death and to questioning unjust structures. It all fits with what we say we’re talking about. Responding to Gospel Hospitality means to listen with a loving heart and have the courage to respond out of love.”*

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Sr. Catherine Ann is not hiding behind the mission statement, she is living it. She is constantly moving amongst the people in the best way she can, building trust and relationships. But she also knows the importance of sitting down and having a cup of tea, just being present in the moment. The gift of presence means to be able to just be with oneself or with others fully.





Hello and a big “*we miss you*” from the Western Associates!  
 July 2021 will mark 2 years since our loving Sisters of St. Martha packed up and moved home to Nova Scotia. Although Sisters left, their spirit is alive and well in the West! And how powerful the Spirit is!



The Martha Gospel Hospitality is palpable when one steps foot on the grounds of Martha Retreat Centre Society in Lethbridge, AB and even stronger when one steps into the Centre’s front doors. We never felt abandoned or left in the dust (so to speak as we are in the prairies); however, we did experience a severe ‘empty nest’ syndrome. During our early faith gatherings, we shed many tears, offered prayers, and shared the impact this change had on our lives, individually and as a group. We had strong support from each other, from Julia Townsend's leadership and from you, the Marthas.

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*We often speak of feeling the beating heart of the Marthas and continually witness how “prayed up” the Centre is!*

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The last of the Marthas in Alberta.

Sisters Theresa Parker, Josie MacLellan, and Josephine Keyzer, the last of the Marthas who cared for the community of Lethbridge through the Martha Retreat Centre, were instrumental in preparing us for this transition. They, along with their predecessors, prepared the Associates by nourishing and growing our Martha heart. They helped us see ‘the Martha’ that lives within each of us and invited us to trust that all unfolds in God care. Your collective belief and trust in us give us courage, energy, and faith to continue to serve our families, our community, and our church with our common Martha heart. For that we give thanks.



So where has our journey taken us since the summer of 2019, you ask...

Our pre-pandemic 2019/2020 Faith Gathering year was one of seeking and searching within our individual hearts and as a group for what it means to carry our associates 'torch' without the Sisters directly with us. We gathered each month and explored enriching materials that continued to nourish our spirit and faith. We had 4 wonderful individuals begin to journey with us.

In March 2020, a new path was being illuminated, COVID-19 put the 'park brake' on everything we knew in our lives. We tried to stay connected through emails, phone calls and prayer. We were able to hold two smaller in-person Faith Gatherings in the Fall of 2020. Father Tim Boyle, one of our journeyers, celebrated Mass with us at the Martha Retreat Centre chapel. What a gift! We had a wonderful discussion around how isolation and restrictions were affecting us and shared where we found strength and resilience to cope.

*Faith in God and love of family and friends was getting us through.*



Faith Gathering, December 2019

In 2021, after the pandemic closed Alberta down again, we held three virtual sessions. In February, Father Tim, offered us an amazing discussion on the power of lamenting. He shared God laments, Christ laments, and creation laments. This offered hope, healing, and a strong reminder of how God hears us - always.

*"Lament says: I still have a voice and there is someone (God) expected to hear me."*

Two very special faith gatherings were organized with the support of Julia Townsend and the power of Zoom. In March, we welcomed special guests from Nova Scotia: Sisters Theresa Parker, Josie MacLellan, Josephine Keyzer, Jovita MacPherson, Claudette Gallant and Catherine MacFarlane who shared the history of the Sisters of St. Martha, interwoven with pieces of their personal stories. It was outstanding and we were delighted!



Zooming in 2021!

We took opportunity to share updates from Lethbridge and Calgary as the Associates from Calgary also joined in. It was a heartfelt reunion and Zoom was buzzing! Emotions were everywhere,



laughter to tears. It was a gift that unwrapped for all - moment by moment! This faith gathering was followed up, in April, with Julia Townsend, our Martha Associate Director, providing a rich and detailed review of the history of the Martha Associates.

Both gatherings gave us an opportunity to revisit our roots as well as enlighten our journeyers to the stories and histories grounding our shared Martha charism. We now wait in faith and prayer until we resume our faith gatherings in September.

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*My beautiful Sisters, I hope you enjoyed this update from the West. Always know how important you are to us and how grateful we are to have you in our lives. Your leadership, faith and care for all does not go unnoticed. So, like the little robin fledglings I see today in my backyard, our "empty nest" remains, however, our hearts are full and enriched by being a part of the Martha family who dares to stand in undaunted hope. God bless and stay well!*

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Lovingly in St. Martha,

~Kathy Gillis,

*Martha Associate (Lethbridge), Martha Retreat Centre Society Board Member & Secretary*



Photos of Martha Retreat Centre in Lethbridge, AB courtesy of MRCS Board

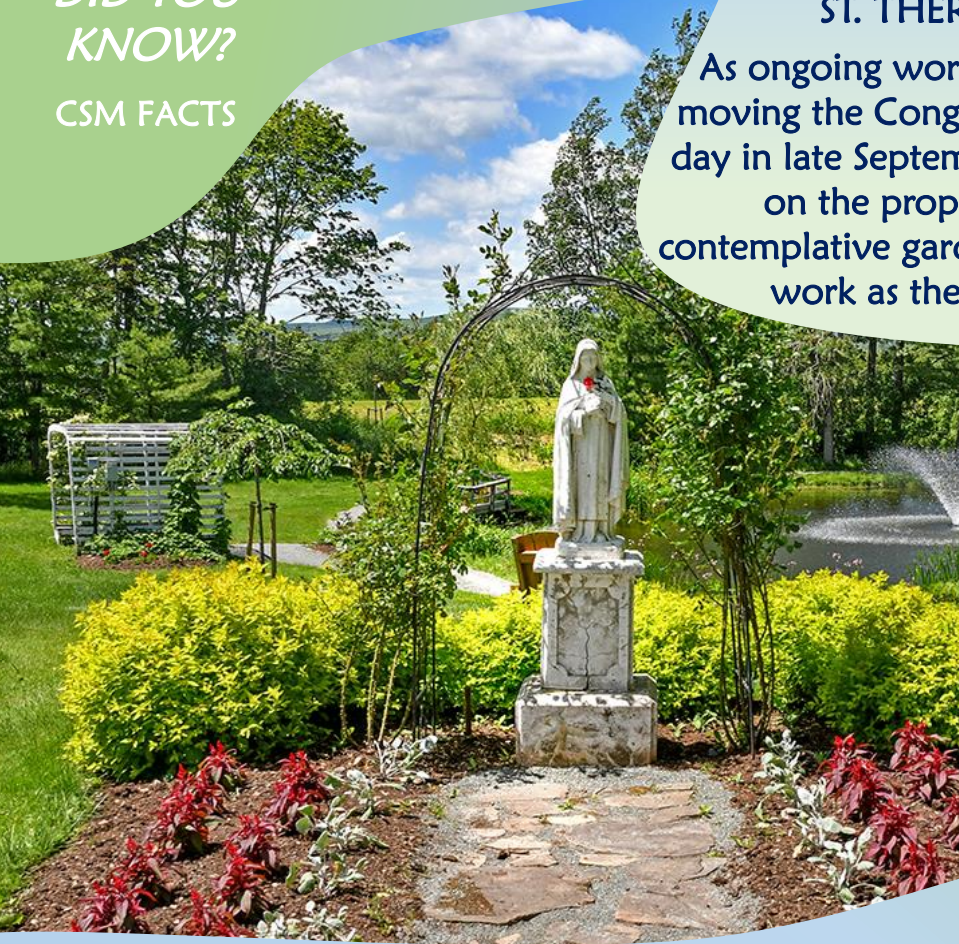


DID YOU KNOW?

CSM FACTS

ST. THERESA'S GARDEN 80<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

As ongoing works on Bethany Centennial Garden are moving the Congregation closer to its expected opening day in late September, let us reflect on a different project on the property, dating back over 80 years: a contemplative garden created with as much love and hard work as the new one – St. Theresa's Garden.



The novices and postulants converted the site of Bethany's first piggery into a garden in 1941. *Motherhouse Annals* of that year describe the project:

*"The labour entailed was considerable, including the cutting of trees, the building of a bridge, the breaking of new land for the planting of vegetables and flowers, making paths, white-washing stone, building an arbor, seats, etc. Most important of all was building of a grotto for the Little Flower whose statue – hand carved by one of the novices – was placed within".*



The original statue of St Theresa, 1941

Over the years, this beautiful contemplative garden on Bethany Property has changed its looks and purposes but remains a quiet and reflective space where one can get immersed in the beauty of nature without much interference from the busy world outside.

Excerpts from Novitiate Diaries, 1941:

May 13: We went over to see about our garden which we had planned to have this year. To us it looks almost hopeless, but Mother Mistress says, "We will have a lovely garden" so we will have a garden.



June 14: to spiritualize our work, Mother Mistress asked Sisters to make a program of some intention for each day. Now our work became more easy. As when at time it seems rather difficult, we remember our very special intention for that day and away with difficulties.

June 1: Every spare moment is spent in St. Teresa's Garden and the more we do the more we see to be done. We planted some squash, carrots, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, and beans. The vegetable garden is enclosed by white stones, a border of sweet peas along the front, nasturtiums on the side.



June 28: That is over. But in the beginning, we planned on having a rose arbor. The more we do the more we want to do. Now, for the archway, as we cannot have the rose arbor, this year the arch will have to suffice for our beautiful entrance to the garden. As Mother Mistress has so often said, "What would we do without cooperation."



Photos on the page: Novices working in St. Theresa's Garden, 1960s

On the evening of June 24<sup>th</sup> of 1941, the formal opening of St. Theresa's Garden took place. The event was filled with prayers to the patron of the garden, St. Therese de Lisieux – The Little Flower.

*Novitiate Diaries, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1941: We got away to an early start the bell ringer knew that every minute was needed so she rang the rising bell at four a.m. It was a busy day and at seven o'clock the Professed Sisters came over. They sang the hymn to the Little Flower at the grotto and proceeded over the bridge. Examined everything very carefully, including the bird house.*

*When they were all seated, some on the trellis, others on white benches we served hot tea, sandwiches, cookies and cakes. I think they enjoyed it very much. I know we did.*



The Grotto to Our Lady of Fatima, a quiet spot on the side of St. Theresa's Garden, was originally a dump. In 1944, it was cleared out and the farm hands helped Sister Magdalene Lichacz haul soil and rocks to make a rock garden. Plants were planted, trees were hauled from Sugar Loaf base and planted above and around the garden. The statues of Our Lady of Fatima and the children were donated and the blessing ceremony of this part of the garden took place in 1948.



B&W photos on this page: blessing ceremony of Our Lady of Fatima Shrine on July 16, 1948

Recently, the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) members and their Councils participated in a process that will assist the CRC executive in articulating a renewed and shared understanding of purpose and mission.



The preparation process included four months of large and small group discussions around 4 themes:

1. *Spiritual Foundations* (January)
2. *Reading the Signs of the Times* (February)
3. *Going Deeper* (March)
4. *Outcomes of Regional Consultations* (April)

The groups looked at the regional realities of our CRC commitments and renewed the vision and priorities for moving forward. The meetings were held over 6 time zones, with up to 200 participants. The fruits of each small group conversation were brought to a larger monthly plenary session, which in turn provided the content for the General Assembly held virtually May 27<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup>.

The Assembly is usually held every 2 years and provides an opportunity for Leaders of Catholic Religious Congregations in Canada to meet and share their experiences and to reflect on important issues.

CSM Congregation Leader, Sr. Brendalee Boisvert, had served on the Executive for the past 5 years as the Atlantic Representative. At this year's Assembly, she was elected as Vice President of CRC and she will continue to serve as Atlantic Representative.



*"I find it a gift and great challenge to sit at this table and listen to the various regions across Canada; to hear what is being done by courageous and committed Religious, to continue to speak to the witness of Religious life and to work together to support Religious life across Canada and into the future."*

*~Sr. Brendalee Boisvert*

Between April 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 161 people from Australia, Benin, Canada, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Ireland, Ivory Coast, and the USA attended the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) conference, held virtually and hosted by our members in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The theme of this year's conference was *Calling to New Horizons*. Keynote speakers, Dr. David Deane, from the Atlantic School of Theology; Sr. Margo Ritchie, Congregation Leader of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada, and Fr. Dan Horan, OFM, from Chicago Theological Union provided rich content for reflection and discussion. Sr. Elizabeth Davis, a Sister of Mercy of Newfoundland and Labrador, skillfully facilitated questions and conversation following each of the talks. She also wove together each talk, and workshop themes into a final session that did indeed help participants to glimpse new horizons. It is the hope that the next NAVFD Conference will be held in person in Edmonton, Alberta in 2023.



Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 conference was postponed and held virtually.

Just prior to the conference, the Board of NAVFD began a Strategic Planning Process. They have engaged People Development Limited of Antigonish, NS <https://www.pdltd.net/> to lead this process. Debbie Castle and Judy Johnson are the lead facilitators and have skillfully and creatively led several conversations, around specific topics, to which the membership of NAVFD had been invited to participate.



The topics were:

- *Visioning and Direction Setting*
- *Service and Programs*
- *Structure, Staffing and Governance*
- *Membership (bilingual)*
- *Relationship (bilingual)*
- *Resources, Learning and Monitoring*

The process will continue with collating the data and setting priorities based on the learnings. It is hoped to be completed by the end of 2021. Sr. Joanne O'Regan, CSM is a member of the NAVFD Board.



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**CSM MISSION**

**We, Sisters of St. Martha, inspired by God's graciousness, hear, embrace and respond to the cry for Gospel hospitality.**