

Sycamore 2016



Greetings from the Martha Associate Director

In 2015 in the Sycamore and the presentations to each of the local communities we delved into Pope Francis Encyclical on the Environment, "Laudato Si", Care for Our Common Home.



This year 2016, Pope Francis has written the Encyclical, "God's Name is Mercy" and encourages us all to reflect seriously on Mercy, our need for it, our Christian obligation to live it, and to be aware of God's gracious gift of Mercy to all of humanity.

Pope Francis draws our attention to Saint John Paul II's Encyclical, "Rich in Mercy" and would like us to pause and reflect on the fact that we have next to forgotten the theme of mercy in today's world. It is as if we are uneasy with the term Mercy and more comfortable with Justice and people receiving "just what they deserve."

On the other hand, Saint John Paul II states, "the mystery of Christ obliges me to proclaim Mercy as God's merciful love... it also obliges me to have recourse to that Mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of history of the Church and of the world. Pope Francis continues, "the church is commissioned to announce the Mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel" (The Name of God is Mercy, appendix, pg. 122) I find this message most comforting. "This gift Mercy is free", let us run to receive it and share it with others.

I'm inviting us all to take time alone and in your Associate group, to reflect on how we can be "Mercying" to ourselves and to others; in other words, to be aware of living mercy and passing it on. We need mercy to forgive the unforgivable, to look tenderly on those struggling and troubled and to be compassionate to the ungrateful; we are all there at one time or another. We need it and so does the world in order to live in hope and peace.

Sister Claudette Gallant

*We have had
the experience
but missed
the meaning.*

John D. O'Leary

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Atlantic Religious Congregations Associate Network (ARCAN)

ARCAN: is a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada. We aim to support and invite each other to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of caring in relationship with humanity and all of creation.

The June meeting closed with the following haiku:

***ARCAN is our name
moving forward is our aim
join us in our dream***

Last year you were informed of an Atlantic conference for 2017. We have some definite information for you at this time. You are encouraged to mark the date on your calendar and plan to attend.

The conference report is as follows:

Date: June 2, 3, 2017

Where: Mount Saint Vincent, Halifax...
Bedford Highway

Conference theme: ***Greening Our Hearts/
Creation Spirituality for today***

Facilitator: Delores Hall: Delores is known for her ability to engage her audience and to bring a visionary component to her presentations. She is a spiritual retreat director, facilitator, artist, poet and an associate with the Iona



community in Scotland. She will incorporate scripture, art and poetry in her presentation.

The brochure will be out by January at the latest.

I walked a mile with pleasure
She chatted all the way
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say

I walked a mile with sorrow
And n're a word said she
But eh, the things I learned from her
When sorrow walked with me.

Robert Browning



The following is the Press Release that was sent out from the CARA study:

A new study from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) reports more than 55,000 associates in 378 religious institutes, eight in ten of them in the United States, a significant increase from the 25,500 associates reported fifteen years ago in the United States. Associates are lay people who live out a religious charism and largely connect with institutes of vowed religious in order to live out the charism together. This study builds on a previous study done in 2000 and 2002 on associates' relationships with vowed religious and was commissioned by NACAR in recognition of its 20th anniversary.

In addition to the 378 religious institutes that responded to a survey on associate leadership, over 10,000 vowed religious and associates responded to a survey about the associate-religious relationship. Both surveys asked about current realities and future expectations.

Associates are increasing in number across the United States and Canada with the vast majority of Associates being 50 years of age or older. With over two-thirds of the associates having started after 2000, directors/coordinators of associates, associates and vowed religious see ongoing

invitation of younger individuals to the associate – religious relationship as one of the keys to the sustainability of the associate communities. Most also agree that associates have a role in interpreting the charism of the community. New models of leadership are emerging within associate communities as institutes face serious challenges concerning the long-term sustainability of the associate – religious relationship.

About 80 percent of directors/coordinators agree that the relationship between vowed members and associates is vital to the future of the institute. Almost all associates and vowed religious agree that associates have valuable skills to contribute to the institute. About 60 percent of associates and vowed religious say the number of associates and the understanding of the associate-religious relationship will increase in the next five years. Maintaining communication with associates and vowed religious is key to maintaining the relationships that bind the community and also attract associates to the community.

Associates and their leadership recognize that maintaining the spirituality and the mission of the institute will be the most challenging and also the most rewarding as the future unfolds for the associate – religious relationship in North America.

Where are the margins in my own life where I rely on Mercy and Love from others?

The New Bethany Building

As many of you know, the Sisters of Saint Martha will be moving to a new building on Bethany grounds. On July 16, 2016, we signed an agreement with the province of Nova Scotia and construction began the next day. This building will house independent, assisted living and long

term care sisters of Saint Martha.

This is a big step for us which has been in the planning stage for at least ten years. The day has come with great gratitude as we prepare to enter into a whole new reality. We know you will be with us in prayer as we make this transition.



Ground breaking ceremony for new facility; Jason Shannon, COO of Shannex, Joe Shannon, founder of Shannex, Sister Brendalee Boisvert, Congregation Leader, Leo Glavine, Minister of Health and Wellness and Randy Delorey, Nova Scotia MLA.



New facility under construction, August 2016

Hopefulness, as an attitude that imbues all we say and do is one of the fruits of contemplation. Among other things it is the result of a life that is steeped in gratitude and thankfulness to God.

Hope in an Age of Despair, Albert Nolan

Charity Federation Martha NGO Liaison and the United Nations.

It is an evolving time at the United Nations. The Religious at the UN are active as an essential part of the UN structure. This group received a grant from the Hilton Foundation to hire a person to pull together the work of the Religious at the UN. The newly hired person will speak for the RUN group while NGOs continue their individual mandates. They help to keep the UN focused on the dignity of each human person and the need for a social protection floor for all Member States. Catholic Religious Women have been chair of the NGOs meetings for years.

Pope Francis addressed the United Nations General Assembly on September 22, 2015. You can view his address on the Martha Associate website. It was strategically interesting that Pope Francis' address was one hour before the General Assembly ratified the Sustainable Development Goals. These Goals are the future focus of the United Nations. When Ban ki Moon was appointed Secretary General he saw the need to develop Sustainable Development Goals for this era of history. He insisted that these goals have input from the grass roots. Following a two year process, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were ratified. They have 178 targets. These goals and targets are so overwhelming that the UN has as its backdrop



the eradication of poverty and saving our planet.

The question is: how will the UN monitor the development of these Goals? There is a process in place whereby each July, there will be a High Level Panel to review these goals with the 193 Member States (Nations) of the General Assembly. Since there is no legislation to bring the Member States to action, it depends on the good will of each Member State.

Ban ki Moon's backdrop to the SDGs is 'No one will be left behind.' He has travelled our globe promoting the human dignity of each person and that no one will be left behind in the future. His term as Secretary General ends December 2016 and a new process for appointing a new Secretary General is in place. For further information on this please see "The UN and You" August 2016 on the Martha website.

In my 13 years attending UN Commissions and International NGO Conferences I have seen, slowly but surely, patterns of change in the structure of the UN and how Civil Society and Nation States interact. There is a more relational openness and the structures provide opportunities to work as partners, not just side by side. As we all know chaos and turmoil have the potential to be great opportunities for new life with the grace of the Holy Spirit and our willingness to question and change for the good of each person and our planet.

Sister Marion Sheridan,
Charity Federation Martha NGO Liaison



Julia Townsend - New Co-Director



I am pleased to announce that Julia Townsend of Sydney Associates has been engaged as Co-Director of Associates. Julia begins September 1, 2016, a part time position with myself, Sister Claudette, for one year. Following this year, the plan is that Julia would be engaged as Director of

Associates. Julia was chosen because of her leadership skills as coordinator of Sydney Associates and as a member of the Associate Committee. She has a Spiritual Direction background and has offered retreats in parishes. Julia is married to Allan and they have a son Graham.

CSM Leadership believes that this collaborative way is a blessing and in keeping with the signs of the times.

To live the quality of mercy is not only to practice personal charity but to work for a society where there is better distribution of goods and services.

Fr. Ron Mac Donald, S.F.M.

UN asks Hollywood for Help

"UN head asks Hollywood to exert its star power" is an article from the Associated Press by Edith Lederer. Take time to reflect and pray that this Artistic Community will come on board with their influence to help end poverty, tackle climate change and promote a fairer and more humane world. Ban Ki Moon states, " this world is in trouble... I'm urging you to work for humanity... for a better world.

Use the article for prayer so we as Martha Associates can be pockets of Hope for this

intention. We can do our part, never underestimate the power of prayer.

The full article can be found at:

<http://tinyurl.com/z3qyocn>



Cape Breton Associates: Saint Martha Feast Day Celebration

On July 29th the Martha Associates of St Clare convent Sydney Mines, Eskasoni, and Sydney gathered together at Our Lady of Fatima parish to celebrate the feast of St Martha. Seventeen individuals attended this mass in honor of our patron saint.

The pastor Duaine Devereaux, delivered a moving and most heartfelt tribute to the Sisters of St Martha. He expressed admiration and gratitude for the many contributions the sisters have made in their various community placements. He mentioned the positive influence they have had, not only in this diocese but throughout Canada.

After mass, in true Cape Breton tradition the associates proceeded to the church hall to have a good “scoff”. Tea biscuits, oatcakes, cheese and fruit were enjoyed in a relaxed atmosphere.



Pictures were taken and friendships deepened. Messages of solidarity from Sisters Brendalee Boisvert, Claudette Gallant and Dorothy Moore were shared with the group. Although we were miles apart celebrating this feast day made us feel united.

We the Martha Associates consider ourselves truly blessed to be a part of the Martha Community. Our shared patron saint simply served. You the sisters of St Martha followed in her footsteps. I hope that we as associates can have the strength and determination to live your mission statement of hearing, embracing and responding to the cry for gospel hospitality.

Many Blessings
Julie Dzaich
Sydney Martha Associate

I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find God apart from the rest of humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi

NEWS FROM

Christ the King Convent, Trenton

Associate Co-ordinator: Shirley VanRyswyk

This year we have 13 Associates and two Sisters, Sister Mary McMahon and Sister Marie Smith. We have no journeyers at this time.

In September 2015 we had 10 members of our group attend the annual retreat at Bethany. Sheila O'Handley was the facilitator. The retreat was entitled, "My Shadow-the Other me". This was a complex subject and new to many. It was very interesting and a lot to digest. We were able to learn about ourselves and recognize our shadow side showing through our lives. Thank you, Sheila!

We meet on the last Sunday of each month. In October 2015 our opening hymn was "Holy Ground" followed by the Prayer of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours. After the prayer we each chose a leaf (which Sister Mary had gathered that morning) to look at and reflect. This unearthed many thoughts which we shared. We then proceeded to consider suggestions for the themes of our meetings for the coming year.

November 2015 - Sister Marion Sheridan was our guest speaker. Because our Church of Christ the King was closing in September many of us were grieving the loss of our Church, our Parish Community and our Priest Fr. Gary MacPherson (moved to St. Andrews). Some members were also trying to deal with health issues, aging process, etc. We were given by Sister Marion "Patient Trust" by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ. After quiet reflection we were invited to express our thoughts and feelings.



December 2015 - Sister Marie prepared and led the prayer. We had fun playing a few Christmas party games and then sang carols along with a tape of musical accompaniment which went over quite well with the Associates. After singing grace a beautiful and delicious meal was enjoyed-compliments of Sister Mary and Sister Marie.

January 2016 - Due to renovations at the Trenton convent our first meeting of the New Year was held at St. John the Baptist conference room. Our guest speaker today was Sister Mary McMahon. Although the power flickered on and off (due to last night's storm) throughout our meeting we were able to pray together and listen attentively to Sister Mary as she shared with us her recent retreat which was focused on praying "the Our Father". Everyone urged Sister Mary to continue next month which she agreed to do.

February 2016 - After prayers we continued with Sister Mary's input on "the Our Father."

March 2016 - Our guests today were Sister Claudette Gallant and Sister Brendalee Boivert. After welcoming them we began our Prayer of the Church. The Magnificent was

sung-led by Sister Brendalee. Sister Claudette shared the "Importance of Commitment, Focus, Intention" by Judy Cannato from "Field of Compassion". She then focused on the many times over the years that the Church has written and spoken about Mother Earth, our common home and how we are called to care for it. Pope Francis is asking now "What can we do?" What is the challenge for each of us?

April 2016 - The men prepared the prayer which focused on the "Year of Mercy". Gary explained the Mercy Logo, its symbolism of shape, colors, image and emblem. He also introduced the Hymn of the Jubilee of Mercy. "Miserecondes Sicut Pater" (Merciful Like the Father). After listening to this beautiful Gregorian chant we began the opening prayer led by Greg. The gospel was read by Lawrence followed by a reflection by Gary from the letter of Pope Francis for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy followed by quiet time and sharing. Next we joined together in prayer to the God of Mercy and Compassion offering our intercessions. Our concluding prayer was composed by Pope Francis for the Year of Mercy which we all prayed together. For our personal use at home we received pamphlets- Examination of Conscience and 8 ways to live a merciful life.

Sister Mary was then asked to share a few highlights of the Halifax gathering with "Fr. Memo" from the U.N. He is a Provoker to systemic change. He said we need systemic change. It's our challenge to do whatever is in our power to change the system to reflect love and justice for all because our world as it is now is not according to God's will.

Sister Mary then concluded her sharing about the Our Father with reference to, "give us this day our daily bread", -relating to the Eucharist- we are to be bread for others. The remainder of the prayer had been discussed at length so that ended her

presentation. Everyone was very grateful for the opportunity to hear the many insights that she had revealed taking the time to look at this prayer word by word- the prayer Jesus taught us- we will now understand its deeper meaning and will never pray it as we did before. Thank you Sister Mary so very much!

May 2016 - The focus was on the Blessed Mother and the Holy Spirit. The theme of our prayer was love. Opening with Sister Brendalee singing "Forever and a Day (from her CD) followed by the Psalms and the Magnificat sung by John Michael Talbot. We then offered our Intercessions both prepared and personal and prayed especially for Jim and Lorna, Linda, Greg and Sister Marie (on retreat) who were unable to be with us this day. Throughout the year all our Associates have had great concern for Jim Campbell due to his health problems and also for his wife, Lorna. They have been in our hearts and in our prayers. Both Jim and Lorna attended our October meeting and Lorna was able to come a few times during the year. They live in Halifax. We miss them so much but we know they are with us in spirit. May the God of Mercy and Compassion grant them His healing and His peace.

Our year end and closing prayer -

O God, look upon the poverty of our hearts with compassion and love. Enable us to give lovingly and freely of our possessions and gifts. This we ask through the intercession of all the saints, especially of those founders of religious orders whose legacy and service we carry on today. Grant that we may be faithful as they were faithful. Amen.

After giving thanks we celebrated our closing with a Pizza Party.

God Bless all the Sisters of St. Martha and Martha Associates.



Merci



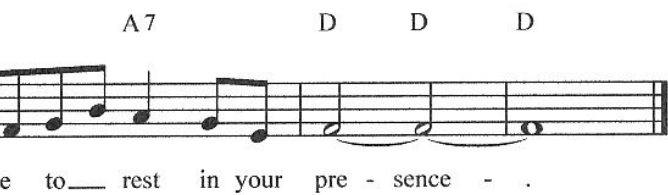
Eastern Coordinators

Pictured: Julia Townsend, Mike Finigan, Shirley Van Ryswyk, Joy MacIntosh, Sister Gen MacDonald, Georgie Edwards, and Sister Claudette Gallant (Missing: Colleen Mac Neil, David Nearing and Nora Bernard)



iful God

Mary Gouthro CSM



*Sister Theresa Parker, Annella Wehlage
and Sister Josephine MacLellan,
coordinators meeting in the West*



Emmaus Group, Calgary, AB

We are a small group of 4 associates. We enjoyed lunch with Sister Claudette when she last visited here. We are geographically distant from each other, but use other means to stay in touch. It will be exciting to see the Lethbridge Associates on the September 23rd weekend. Warm greetings to all Associates!



*Light penetrates the darkness for those
Who face their fears;
Love stands by them with mercy and forgiveness.*

Psalms 112

Glace Bay Associates

Our meetings have been held on a regular basis since January of this year. Paula and I were delighted to welcome Sister Claudette, Linda Mac Neil, Kenneth MacAdam and our sojourner, Joanna Crosby, to our home. Margie Turnbull and Kathy MacDonald are not presently with us but I believe this may be temporary. After each meeting we share a lovely lunch!

Our group is small and tight knit so each session begins with a “check in”. Sister Claudette was in Denver with Mike Finigan to attend the Vincentian Family Gathering Conference on “systemic change”. Mike shared his short story, **“A Trip to Denver and Beyond”**. It is a story of his encounter with a man named James. A must read! Paula’s hearing is getting better since her cochlear implant, Kenneth is running

marathons, Linda is still using her gift of music with choir and sharing her time with children and grandchildren, Joanna is working full time and we’re all healthy.

Our opening prayer has been the **“Martha Associate Prayer”**. It is most appropriate since



we believe our call is written in the signs of the times and the radical call of the Gospel. We have also recited and discussed Michael Morwood's prayer, **"Led by the Spirit"**, a most suitable prayer since it reinforces our relationship with the Spirit, present in all places at all times in this vast universe.

We are currently reading, reflecting upon and discussing the **"Rebirthing of God"** by John Phillip Newell. Another must read! Newell speaks of the collapse of western Christianity and asks, "What are we to do?" The three main responses to this collapse are "to deny that it is happening, to frantically shore up the foundations of the old thing, and to ask what is trying to be born that requires a radical reorientation of our vision". Where is the Spirit leading us, the Spirit speaking of relationships and connections? Hopefully we come to an awareness of our need to reconnect.

We have also taken the time to discuss the connections, relationships, and interrelationships between/among all living and non living things which make up this earth in the context of Pope Francis' Encyclical, **"Climate Change and Inequality - Our Care for our Common Home"**.

Members of the Martha Associates also attended a session called **"Building Hope, Creating Communities of Belonging"** held at Bethel Presbyterian Church Hall. This was sponsored by the Cape Breton Coalition for Social Justice and funded by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha and the Sisters of Charity.

The presenter was Fr. "Memo". He spoke of his life in Columbia. He was certainly a man who walked the walk to talk the talk. He spoke of the great need for systemic change and sustainable development. He asked "How is our life a sign of hope, to keep alive the hope of people living in poverty?" He spoke of the Canadian mining company in his area. The land people had lived upon, in which they planted their crops, was taken. Those who worked for the company received very low wages. The water was poisoned and then they just left. This was Sister Marion Sheridan's message at last year's Martha Retreat.

Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

David Nearing

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.

Martha Centre, Lethbridge

What a year it has been! Firstly, 2015 was dedicated to “consecrated life” whereby we, the baptized, through married, single and consecrated life, are called to fulfill our baptismal commitment to love God, all people and reach out to those we meet with love and respect. Overlapping that came the designation of the Year of Mercy with the introduction of the Papal Laudato Si, Praise Be To You, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis.

And so once again we Associates have journeyed alongside the Marthas sharing the same charism, meeting each month for prayer and faith sharing, growth and ministry. Each of us look so forward to that dose of hospitality, the warmth of welcome, the smiles and hugs that greet us each time we enter the Retreat Centre door. Incidentally, its’ chapel door, was designated by the Diocese of Calgary as a Holy Door, making this Lethbridge Oasis even more special. A number of Associates assist the Sisters by assuming door duty twice a week when the retreat centre is open to the public.

Indeed it was a very full year, which began with the September weekend retreat. The Martha sisters facilitated using Laudato Si as the theme (we were all generously given a copy) and supplemented with presentations, video and discussion. With consecrated Life in mind, the sisters also took turns sharing their interesting life profile. A number of the Associates have provided the same and that will continue when we return to meetings in Autumn. A storm at Christmas prevented the Calgary Emmaus group from joining us but St. Monica’s made up for their absence as we



exchanged gifts, lifted wine glasses as toasts, shared a wonderful Yuletide banquet and ended the evening with a rousing Christmas carol sing-along

Entering a new year, Sister Claudette, on behalf of the congregation, joined us to help welcome Mary Frances Kendel and Niki and George Crisfield as Martha Associates. This Spring we have enjoyed various presentations and vigorous discussions on the environment and were to ponder what we as Associates could do as a group to ‘stir the environment pot’. Associates take turns providing the prayer in Chapel to begin each monthly meeting. The year as usual, terminated pleasantly with a barbeque, pot luck, and social at the Retreat Centre AND is still standing.

We so value and love our Martha Sisters and thank them collectively for their example, generosity, their hospitality even when ‘dog tired’ and wish to express our profound thanks for the many, many services they provide for our community at large. Together we are blooming where we’ve been planted. Thank you dear Sisters!

Submitted by Ina Boyden

Martha Community, Sydney

The Sydney group continues happily to meet in the warm and welcoming Shaw Room at the Bethel Presbyterian Church hall on George Street and we say thanks again to the people at the church who share their space with us. We also continue to be blessed with the leadership of Julia Townsend who always makes things run cheerfully and prayerfully.

Looking back, it has been another year gone by in the blink of an eye, and over the year we welcomed some interesting speakers, talked about our faith journey, shared some delicious lunches (we are also blessed by great bakers and sandwich artists!) and prayed some mighty prayers.

In October we looked over past business and planned ahead. Also, in October, Sydney member Mike Finigan traveled with Sister Franklyn Ferguson and Sister Claudette Gallant to the annual Vincentian Family Gathering, that particular gathering being held in Denver, Colorado. It was a huge gathering of various orders, and varieties of societies of St. Vincent de Paul. Mike wrote an account of that gathering for the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish – Martha Associates newsletter of November, 2015 entitled “Denver and Beyond”. <http://associates.themarhas.com/?m=201511>



In late November, Julia and Mike attended a regional leaders' meeting in Eskasoni, to represent our group and to share practices and look at initiatives the Martha Associates would want to work on as individual groups and as a whole.

In the regular November meeting, the group welcomed Joan McNeil who talked to us, and sang to us, about her journey in the Church as a musician and singer, and about how music has deepened her sense of spirituality. We were happily informed and entertained!

In December we met at Swiss Chalet for our Christmas dinner meeting. In January, winter got the better of us and our meeting was stormed out.

In February, we met with lots of business to discuss and then moved on to a study session on the eight women saints who reflect the eight beatitudes, in the windows at the chapel at Bethany. Julia put together a brief but substantial biography on the saints for us and gave us all bookmarks featuring the individual saints. Their lives proved a rich source of discussion, and worth looking into whenever you find yourself admiring the windows at the beautiful chapel at Bethany.

In March we had a guest speaker, Dr. Anne Frances D'Intino, who is the vice-chair of the Hospice Palliative Care Society of Cape Breton County. She gave a moving talk about people dying with dignity, and pointedly without assisted suicide. She talked about people needing a home away from home where they can spend their last days in a comfortable and homelike atmosphere, surrounded by family, friends, and caregivers, and about the initiative taken by the society to raise funds to build a



hospice facility independent of the hospital for people who cannot be taken care of properly at home and who would not have to live their last days in the institutional and clinical surroundings of a hospital. Anne Francis also talked about taking the time, even in times of good health (especially so), as uncomfortable though it may be, to talk about our own death and what we as the dying wish for ourselves and our families when the inevitable comes to pass, with simplicity or in confusion and complication. It was sound advice, definitely something to think about, and we are grateful for the opportunity to hear Dr. D'Intino speak.

In April, Sister Claudette Gallant came to speak to the group on Pope Francis's Encyclical on the Environment and how we as Christians might hold ourselves out as "pockets of hope" for the world in setting an example of being good stewards of the earth. Sister Claudette encouraged us all to visit the

Vatican website for the encyclical and other information on the environment, believing that every group and every individual can make a difference in a world overwhelmed by pollution and environmental decimation. Despite what often appears to be a hopeless situation, we need to keep an open dialogue on the environment, and to be vigilant and always aware of what is in the news in this regard, and to renew our faith and our resolve to be pockets of hope for the world. Many thanks to Sister Claudette for this talk!

In May, the month of Mary, Julia led us in prayer and meditation as we observed the Seven Sorrows of Mary and talked about Mary's role in the life and crucifixion of her son Jesus – a responsibility steeped in love, wonder, anguish and joy. The stories of Jesus, as told from Mary's point of view, elicited a heartfelt and empathetic response from the members of the group. We also celebrated a birthday in our group during the meeting. Mary MacKinnon, a member of the Martha Associates since the group's inception, celebrated her 80th birthday amidst many warm and happy wishes from the group – and with a beautiful cake (with wonderful icing)! And many more, Mary!

In June, we look forward to our year end (already!) potluck at Bethel, and we look forward to a busy, prayerful and informative year as associates coming up in September.

Submitted by Mike Finigan

*We are influenced by a culture immersed in reward/ punishment system,
one that places judgment over mercy.*

Kathy Murtha, Scarboro Missions

St. Clare Convent, Sydney Mines

Here we are again! How time goes by! Greetings to all Marthas and Associates from your partners at St. Clare in Sydney Mines, N.S.

Our year began in October, 2015 when we met and discussed our plan for our gatherings from October, 2015 to June 16, 2016. Why October? In September all our Eastern Associates meet as a group at Bethany in Antigonish. That is always a prayerful, peaceful and fun experience. We come away rejuvenated and hopefully excited about preparing for a new year.

In October we discussed several different ways to proceed. The one we chose had a continuous theme. We were blessed by God to have someone to prepare and deliver the program in the person of Sister Mary Gouthro. She spent many hours over the course of several months and we were all delighted and enlightened by the outcome. Are you anxious to know what we did? Well, we all bought a copy of the book, *Laudato Si*, encyclical letter of the Holy Father Pope Francis, on the care for our common home. Each evening Sister Mary would present a passage, which we had read as "homework". After her presentation she would lead a discussion on how this affected our lives and how we could make, "our space" a better place. Sometimes she would



show a complimentary video and discussion would ensue. Everyone enjoyed the experience and liked the continuity of the process. We will be forever indebted to Sister Mary Gouthro. Bravo!

During the year we did other things too. We (with other Associates) did a taping for Mass for Shut Ins that was aired on CTV on Christmas day. In January we had our annual Christmas Pot Luck Party, (too busy in December). Prior to dinner we have a prayer service to remember our deceased Associates and Sisters. This year we were deeply saddened by the death of a dear friend, an exceptional deeply spiritual person and a devoted Associate Donna Marinelli. We miss her a lot along with all others who have died. They continue in our memories and bless us. At this service we have prepared a Ritual during which we have a card with the name of each deceased member on it. These are passed out to those present. When the name on the card is called the person holding it goes to the table where candles have been arranged in a circle. The person with the card places it beside a candle, then lights the candle in memory of the deceased person. When all names have been called and all candles lit we sing a blessing. That being done we sing our Grace Before Meals and continue to enjoy our evening.

In May we had our official visit and presentation from Sister Claudette Gallant who is always so interesting and informative. We are especially privileged to have Sister Claudette living at St. Clare Convent so we have access to her humour and wisdom at all times.



At this writing we are preparing for our closing June Barbecue. We will then send each other off with a blessing for a peaceful and enjoyable summer. We hope to be reunited again in September at Bethany and begin anew in

October, 2016.

May God continue to bless us always and in all ways.

Georgie Edwards

Sisters and Associates from St. Clare Convent

*I will show hidden thing
Hidden things you have not known
Isaiah 48:6*

St. Monica Associates, Lethbridge

The Holy Door.

When Catholics go through the Holy Door in a state of Grace they receive a plenary indulgence.

I remember my mother telling me that when you approach a door, you may not know what is on the other side, so you need to be on your best behavior and properly dressed. As a result of that piece of advice I must say I do approach an unknown door with a certain apprehension.

St Martha's Retreat Centre in Lethbridge has been designated by Bishop Henry to have one of the Holy doors in their Chapel in Southern Alberta for the Year of Mercy. As a result Mass is said once a month in the Chapel for the duration. Our associates of St Monica had the privilege of attending the April Mass.

Fr Kevin welcomed us as we arrived at the Retreat Centre. We then made our way down the corridor to the chapel, it was with a little apprehension that we approached the Holy Door, not knowing who was on the other side. It was a great joy to find a lot of people that we knew but had not seen for a long time. We also were surprised that we had the privilege of ministering



at the Mass. Fr Kevin treated us to the lovely homily about the first Synod of Bishops. One of our sister associates Ina played the piano, and we all joined in the singing. Afterwards we mingled with old friends and then we proceeded to the dining room with our own associates for some light refreshments and good conversation. It was a very memorable evening and with God's blessings and the indulgence and a couple of Irish passports we are good to go.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sister Josie and Sister Theresa for all their hard work in keeping our associates together through these difficult times of change.

Regards to all Joan and Romano.

Teachers' Residence, Eskasoni

We attended the Associate weekend at Bethany and so began our year with more awareness of our 'shadow side' also of our God given gifts, and eager to support each other on our Associate Journey.

Meetings were held in October, November and December and plans were in place for our special dinner in January. In November Sisters Catherine and Genevieve hosted Sister Claudette, Director, along with the Coordinators and their Assistants for a meeting. It was a fruitful meeting and a simple lunch was enjoyed. Some had never visited Eskasoni and were impressed with our beautiful scenery.

We joined the Associates from the area for the TV mass for Shut Ins' shown on Christmas Day.

Early in the year our Associates expressed an interest in having someone talk on the grieving process. Many in the community were dealing with sadness in their lives, resulting from a drowning, a car accident ... Sister Marion Sheridan was asked and agreed to do this presentation at our February meeting. Unfortunately, only one Associate was able to attend this meeting and she benefited greatly from Marion's talk.



Other plans for 2015-2016 were not fulfilled as 'God intervened.' Early in January Sister Genevieve suffered a fall at the school and this resulted with some fractures and a lengthy recuperation period at Bethany.

Although she was extremely well looked after at Bethany she was delighted to return home to Eskasoni, enjoy Catherine's home cooking, meet her friends and be greeted by all the smiling faces in Grade 4.

We leave you with a quote :

Let us remember this: One cannot preach the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's Life.

Pope Francis

Martha Associates Teachers' Residence Eskasoni

Fear is such a powerful emotion for humans that when we allow it to take us over, it drives compassion right out of our hearts.

Thomas Aquinas

[Sycamore 2016]

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Western Gathering 2015



Eastern Gathering 2015

*Fearlessness and inner freedom are
qualities we associate with prophets.*

*Hope in an Age of Despair,
Albert Nolan*

The Martha Associate Website is: associates.themarthas.com

**Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of the life of your faith community please
email material to: Tanya Mullin communications@themarthas.com**

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